



Florida Public Service Commission

Consumer Bulletin



E. Leon Jacobs, Jr.,
Commissioner

How To Better Understand Your Telephone Bill

Do you have trouble reading your telephone bill? Do you have problems understanding the features listed and their costs? We at the Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) have heard from many of you who have asked about these charges and services.

Telephone bills have become more complex in recent years due to a growing number of companies offering a wider variety of services, including Internet access, second lines in the home or business, and voice mail. Many of these charges, including long distance, can end up on one bill sent by your local telephone company.

Several telephone companies, in response to consumer concerns, have begun making changes to their telephone bills. One telephone company in the state specifically redesigned its telephone bills to make them easier to read for consumers. Customers of this company, who subscribe to a variety of services, began receiving overhauled bills during the month of November. Initially, the new bills went to customers who package phone service with Internet or cellular phone service. The rest of the company's customers will begin receiving the updated bills in the spring of 2001.

The new bills appear on larger paper with icons on each page referring consumers to further explanation and detail. More detailed information on charges will be presented in two columns, with referral information on the left and charges on the right.

Although this is good news for the consumer, telephone bills still can be pretty confusing. To help you better understand them, the PSC has a very popular brochure called "**Navigating Your Phone Bill**" that is available to you free of charge. This brochure is an easy and practical guide to understanding your telephone bill and is something you can use to define the many charges, fees and taxes you are likely to encounter on your monthly bill.

It is important to read your telephone bill every month to make sure you have been charged for the appropriate services. Numerous telephone scams exist. Two of the most common are slamming and cramming. Slamming occurs when your local or long distance company is changed without your permission or knowledge. Cramming happens when companies add charges to your telephone bill for services that you never authorized or ordered.

Again, the PSC encourages you to read your telephone bill carefully. When you see a charge on your bill that you are not familiar with or don't understand, call your local telephone company. If you still don't understand, call the PSC toll-free at **1-800-342-3552**. You may also contact us by e-mail at contact@psc.state.fl.us, or visit our Internet home page at <http://www.floridapsc.com>.

TIPS:

Think of your telephone bill the same way you do your credit card bill or bank statement. Look at it carefully as soon as you receive it -- every page, not just the page that has the total amount due.

Make sure you recognize all of the company names listed on your telephone bill.

Look for any calls that you did not make or any services you never agreed to buy.

Don't ignore small charges. Some unscrupulous companies bill for small amounts, hoping that you won't notice. Even small charges can add up if they appear on your telephone bill every month.

Make sure you understand all of the charges on your bill. If you don't, contact the company listed on the bill and ask for an explanation.

Navigating Your Phone Bill

A Consumer's Guide to
Understanding Residential Charges



E. Leon Jacobs, Jr. is a Florida Public Service Commissioner. The PSC sets the rates utility companies charge for natural gas, electric and telephone service within the state. In 36 counties, it sets the price you pay for the water you drink, if your water company is privately-owned.