

Slamming and Cramming

Iowa law prohibits “slamming” and “cramming.” Written or oral authorization must be obtained from the customer before services can be changed (slamming) or charges can be added (cramming). A third party verification company must record an oral authorization to switch carriers or add charges. In most cases, bills containing an unauthorized provider change and/or additional services will be switched back, at no cost. Consumers should always check with their local service provider before paying suspect or unauthorized charges.



Preventing Slams and Crams

Contact your local telephone company about placing a “freeze” on your service to avoid slamming. Some telephone service providers offer “blocks” to avoid cramming. If available, confirm if charges apply for implementing a freeze or block on your phone service account.

Do-Not-Call Registry

Consumers may register their land line or wireless telephone number with the **national do-not call registry** by placing a free call to 1-888-382-1222 or by TTY at 1-866-290-4236, or by going online to www.donotcall.gov.

Confirm your carrier

Using your home telephone, dial 1-700-555-4141 or dial 1, plus your area code and 700-4141, respectively, for this free call to verify your current out-of-state and in-state long distance carrier. A recorded voice will state the name of the current company providing your service. Customers may also call their local telephone company to confirm their long-distance provider.

Contact the IUB for help



For help regarding telecommunications complaint resolutions, please contact the **Iowa Utilities Board** at:

Iowa Utilities Board

Toll-free: 1-877-565-4450

Local: (515) 725-7321

Email: customer@iub.iowa.gov

Internet: <http://iub.iowa.gov/>

1375 East Court Avenue, Rm. 69

Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0069

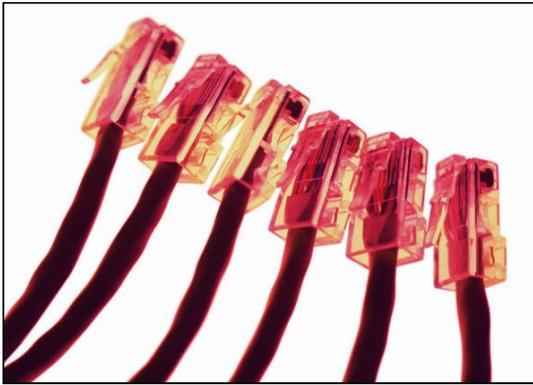
UTILITY CUSTOMER
INFORMATION



Tips to Avoid Telephone Billing Deception

Consumer choice

Today's telecommunications industry provides consumers numerous choices among a variety of services and providers. Customers may receive solicitations or telemarketing calls claiming to offer lower telephone rates, additional options, and better service. Unfortunately, many consumers are unaware of the



types of deceptive marketing methods used by some companies. This brochure provides helpful tips to guard against such misleading telephone marketing or billing techniques.

Unauthorized service changes

If you receive mail claiming to verify a change of your telephone company, or a service that you did not request, notify the company that mailed the material and make it clear that you did not authorize the change or any charges, and ask the company to correct the error as soon as possible.

Cramming charges

"Cramming" is the practice of placing unauthorized or deceptive charges on your telephone bill. Crammers rely on making telephone bills appear confusing in an attempt to trick consumers into paying for services they did not authorize or receive, or that cost more than the consumer was led to believe. Examples of deceptive charges include errant fees for bill statements, recovery of carrier costs, Web pages, caller ID, and voice mail. Such sales fees are usually offered by third party providers and billed through local phone companies.

Slamming charges

"Slamming" is the illegal practice of switching a consumer's land line telephone company for local, local toll, or long distance service without the customer's permission. Companies may "slam" customers through deceptive telemarketing calls, direct mail, or Internet solicitations.

Examine your bill

Whether paying online or through paper billing, carefully examine your monthly telephone bill to detect unauthorized long distance companies or other services. Watch for new entries or charges you did not authorize. If you notice fees you have not authorized, do not pay the charges, but follow your billing instructions for disputing such costs. Immediately contact the company to request an explanation and removal of the charges.

Telemarketing Calls

If you receive a solicitation call and don't understand a service being offered, ask questions. If the caller is unable to explain the service, request the telemarketer to send you the written materials. Read all materials thoroughly before agreeing to authorize a switch in providers or services.



Listen closely to sales calls

Don't be deceived by telemarketers offering new telephone providers or services. Be careful how you answer any questions and make sure you understand what you are accepting before saying "yes." If you are unclear, ask questions. Discounts or offers of savings that sound too good to be true probably are.

Read the fine print

Never sign anything without careful review. Accepting incentives such as checks, free minutes, or contest promotions may include additional terms, services, or early termination fees. Be wary of marketing material that may contain fine print which can authorize a switch in your telephone services.