

# What is Slamming?

“Slamming” is any practice that changes your local or long distance telephone company without your consent. It is unfair competition that robs you of your right to choose companies and it most often happens without your knowledge. It is wrong, and there are things that you can do about it.

## Is long distance slamming happening in Wyoming?

Yes, and instances of long distance slamming have about doubled since 1994. Right now, however, the issue of slamming by long distance telephone companies is primarily federal because it involves interstate carriers. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) prohibits slamming by long distance companies, and it is the appropriate agency to assist you with long distance slamming problems. Since most slams now concern interstate long distance telephone service, the FCC should be notified because it has the authority to act if regulatory action is needed. Although the majority of slams involve interstate telephone companies over which the Wyoming Public Service (PSC) does not have regulatory authority, the PSC has experienced complaint specialists who can still help you with information and tips on how to successfully resolve existing disputes if you have been slammed.

## Is local slamming happening in Wyoming?

No, not yet. But when the option of choosing among local telephone companies becomes available in Wyoming in the near future, along with it will come the possibility of local company slamming. The PSC is investigating how best to address this issue as local service competition develops in Wyoming.



## You have the right to choose.

You have the right to use any long distance company you choose, to change companies whenever you wish, and to have your choice respected. Nobody can legitimately alter your choice without your authorization. This won't keep some companies from trying to slam you. To make slamming more difficult, the FCC requires that any change of long distance carrier be done through a Letter of Agency (LOA) — a written document in which you specifically authorize a change of long distance telephone company. Under FCC rules, an LOA may not be sent to you with other information such as contests or prizes. To be valid, an LOA must be strictly limited to authorizing a change of long distance companies and must be clearly identified as doing this.

## Some advice on avoiding and detecting slams.

If you receive a telephone call about switching long distance companies, and if you are not interested, tell the caller with a clear and stern “NO” that you are not interested in getting their service. It doesn't end here, however. Callers will often also ask you to verify your address and telephone number. If you respond with a “yes”, this is sometimes re-recorded by them as an authorization by you to change your long distance telephone companies even though such “manufactured” tape recordings are not effective authorizations from you to change companies. Information helps in tracking slammers. So, with all telephone calls regarding changes in long distance or

local carriers, please write down the names and telephone numbers of the persons with whom you spoke, and the dates and times of the calls.

If you receive letters or promotions in the mail which seem to involve switching long distance or local telephone companies, do not sign anything without reading it carefully to understand the terms. Read the fine print carefully because that's where the “slam” may be hidden. Some promotions can be very misleading.

If you receive a card or letter in the mail which “verifies” or otherwise indicates that you have switched to another company, and you didn't authorize the change, notify your local telephone company at once to confirm whether or not you are still receiving service from the company of *your* choice. If you are not, tell the new company immediately that you did not authorize the change.

Remember that some slammers don't bother to ask. If you don't remember being contacted and asked to switch telephone companies, perhaps the slammer *didn't* ask you.



## Check your telephone bills.

Slammers are out to get your money, so read your telephone bill carefully. If you see unfamiliar company names or unusual charges (“change charges” and the like are favorites) on your telephone bill, call your local telephone company and ask them to assist you with an explanation. If you did not authorize a change, you are not responsible for the “change charge.”

# Strike Back at Slamming!

**What to do first:** If you have been slammed,

- A. **tell** your local telephone company that you did not request a change to the “new” local or long distance company;
- B. **tell** them that you want to be reconnected to your carrier of choice;
- C. **insist** that you want all switching fees (including “change charges”) removed from your bill;
- D. pay your local telephone charges but **don’t pay** the long distance charges that are in dispute.

**Who to call next:**

- A. **Call** your preferred local or long distance company, report that you were switched without your permission, and ask to be reconnected (*there should be no charge for this*).
- B. **Call** the company that slammed you and tell them that you will only pay the charges which your regular phone company would have imposed for the calls you made. When you make these contacts, be sure to record the number you called, name of the person to whom you spoke and the time and date of your call. **Remember**, it is your responsibility to call the FCC and notify them if you have been slammed and are having trouble working things out.

**If you still need help.** You can get additional help at no charge by calling the FCC’s Consumer Protection Branch at 1-888-Call FCC (1-888-225-5322) or the Wyoming PSC at 1-307-777-7427.

## Filing a Complaint

**When should I file a complaint?** If you cannot resolve your long distance company problem you should file a complaint with the FCC. If the slamming is a local telephone service problem, please file your complaint with the Wyoming PSC.

**What to include:** No special complaint forms are required for writing to either the FCC or the PSC. All you need to do is prepare a letter in your own words, include the following:

- ☎ Your name and address.
- ☎ Your contact telephone number.
- ☎ The telephone number that was slammed.
- ☎ The names of your local and long distance companies of choice.
- ☎ The name of the local or long distance company to which you were slammed.
- ☎ The names and telephone numbers of telephone company employees (or others) with whom you spoke in an effort to resolve your dispute and the dates and times of the calls.
- ☎ A copy of your bill showing the charges which you dispute.
- ☎ Copies of other documents such as “contest entry” forms and “checks” from the local or long distance “slammer.”
- ☎ Copies of any LOA you may have signed, if available.
- ☎ Any other information which you think would help in resolving your complaint.

### Where Send to It:

**Federal Communications Commission**  
FCC National Call Center, Common Carrier Bureau  
1-888-CALL FCC (1-888-225-5322)  
Enforcement Division, MSC 1600A2  
Consumer Protection Branch  
TTY: 1-888-TELL FCC (1-888-835-5322)  
2025 M. Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20554  
<http://www.fcc.gov>

**Wyoming Public Service Commission**  
1-307-777-7427 (voice) • 1-307-777-7427 (TTY)  
Consumer Complaint Section,  
Hansen Building, Suite 300, 2515 Warren Ave.  
Cheyenne, WY 82002  
<http://psc.state.wy.us>

**Let Us Help You!** The PSC has a staff of trained and experienced utility complaint personnel to assist you with slamming problems. If the problem persists, please call us and allow us to help.

# Telephone Slamming



# You don't have to be a Victim!