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A Consumer protection Guide

South Dakota Public Utilities Commission

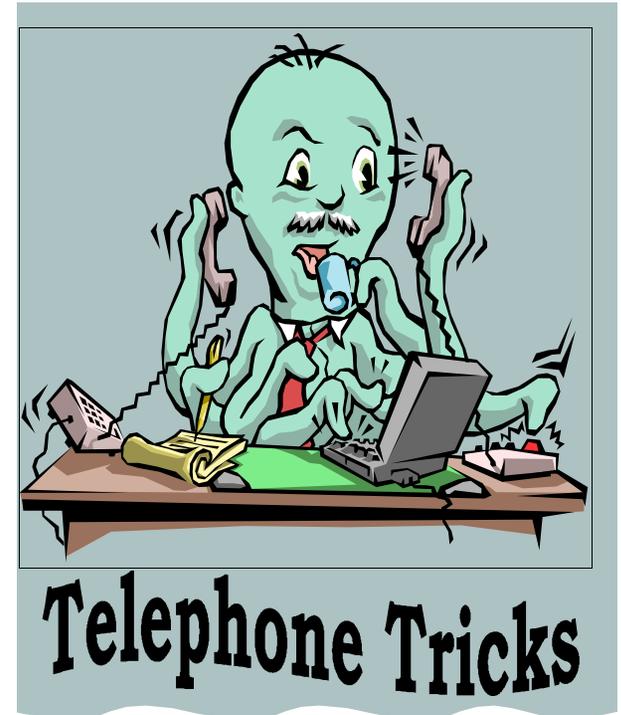
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Slamming:

unauthorized switching of telephone service

In South Dakota a telecommunications company must get your permission in writing or verified by a **full** taped conversation before switching your service. If a company has not gotten your permission before switching, you are not required to pay for the services the company has billed to you. Make copies of your billing and send it to the PUC with an explanation.

Jamming:

receiving unwanted telemarketing calls

Telemarketers “jam” your telephone line with their solicitations. You may have your number placed on a “DO NOT CALL” list by sending your name and number to: Telephone Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, PO Box 9014, Farmingdale NY 11735-9014.

Cramming:

unauthorized billing for services

Cramming occurs when unrequested services are “crammed” onto your billing by a company other than your regular local or long distance company. Examples of cramming could include unauthorized charges for:

- voice mail
- sports line subscription
- paging services
- calling cards
- psychic hotline memberships
- travel packages
- personal toll free numbers

Such charges are often incurred when you call an information services number (such as a 900 number) or participate in a sweepstakes contest and unknowingly you are enrolled in some service. The company providing the service then arranges for the billing through your local telephone company. Make copies of your billing and send them to the PUC with an explanation.

Fluffing:

switching to higher rates without notice

If you get a call from a telemarketer who promises a very low rate but when you get your billing, the rate is higher, you’ve been “fluffed.” Make a copy of your billing and send it to the PUC with a description of what you were promised. We will make the telephone company either prove that they promised a different rate or they will have to rerate your billing to the promised rate.

Spamming:

receiving unwanted advertisement thru email

Receiving unwanted emails may be annoying and might even slow up your computer network. Contact your internet service provider (ISP) to see if a “spam filter” or other advise is available.

Consumer Tips

1. Carefully review your phone bill each month. Look for company names you don’t recognize or charges you didn’t authorize.
2. Always read the fine print when signing up for contests or redeeming coupons. You may be agreeing to new or additional services.
3. Instruct anyone who uses your telephone about charges for calls placed to information and entertainment services. Frequently these services add monthly subscription charges to your telephone bill.
4. Your local company may offer a “PIC freeze” which would prohibit a change in your long distance carrier.
5. If you have any questions or concerns about your telephone billing, contact the PUC.