

94-129.

From: Tech Support <commpro@CERF.NET>
To: FCCMAIL.SMTPNLM("slamming@comments.fcc.gov")
Date: 8/21/97 11:16am
Subject: How I was slammed

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

I received a bill from my Pacific Bell phone company, which included a page from a company called HBS - Hold Billing Services for a company called Telmatch Telecom. This bill included taxes and an activation and min use fee. There were no call charges BECAUSE I DIDN'T ORDER THIS SERVICE. When I called their phone number, I was referred to another phone number. The person there asked if my name was Susan Torres. It is not. Then she asked if my address was _____. It is not. She explained that Susan Torres had won a sweepstakes and that part of that included this telephone service. I reiterated that I am not Susan Torres and that I did not win a sweepstakes, nor do I want their service, which she then offered to me again. She said that they would refund the charges in the next 60 - 90 days.

SEP 21 1997

Today I called Pacific Bell and asked them how it was possible for someone to assign a service to my phone bill without my approval or knowledge. Their explanation has to do with deregulation and the many carrier options that are now available to people for telephone services. I inquired why there aren't safeguards in place to protect consumers and the representative said that it would just be too enormous a task to implement such a procedure.

In frustration, I called the California Public Utilities Commission and told them my story. I elaborated that if I was a criminal, this would be a perfect way to rip people off. Establish a bogus long distance company, pay someone to "win" sweepstakes and give random phone numbers that belong to real people. The charges wash through on their phone bill, because there are no actual call charges to look at - just service charges, since the person with the phone ISN'T USING THE SERVICE TO MAKE CALLS. Someone is getting rich with no overhead to speak of.

Their rep said that the information goes to the local phone companies via computer tape and that there is no verification whatsoever.

I suggested that the CPUC consider requiring a password apparatus for every live telephone line. In a database it would require 5-6 characters and could be checked whenever a call came in for changes, additions, or deletions on an account. This information would be included on any transmission of information to change an account. When these outside vendors tried to make these kinds of changes on random phone numbers, they would have to have the password, or the change/addition could not go through. Simple, don't you think? He said it was a good idea - they'd never thought of it???

Considering this is the way most security systems work, from bank accounts to internet activity, I am appalled that the CPUC hasn't implemented any security at all on the ordering and monitoring of telephone lines and billing. There are some fly-by-night outfits making an enormous amount of money taking all of us to the cleaners because we are too busy to read every line of our phone bill, because we have up to now TRUSTED the phone company to take care of us in a responsible way, and mainly because there are no rudimentary safeguards on a system that we are all dependent upon.

Please, please, please do something about this growing problem. I work hard for my living, and don't appreciate being scammed or slammed!

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94-129

From: Frances Zuniga <zuniga1@ix.netcom.com>
To: FCCMAIL.SMTPNLM("slamming@comments.fcc.gov")
Date: 8/21/97 12:02pm
Subject: Slamming

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I was slammed three times. Twice was by AT&T. Another time was by a company in Irvine ("National") where the signature on the authorization form was forged. This happened after I sent GTE a notification not to change my carrier without written approval.

AUG 21 1997

What made me really mad about it was that the change was in the name of my ex husband, whose name had not been on the telephone account for three years. It seemed to me that my regular carrier, should have known it was not my account. I have since again notified my carrier not to change anything without my written approval. Since then I had received one notice asking for an approval - apparently another slamming attempt.

I had already filed a written complaint with the FCC. I did receive a full credit from this company, but I really think that where signatures are forged there should be a criminal investigation. I also think that companies like this are targeting Hispanic and other minority groups.

I also think that the local carriers should take some of the responsibility. If these companies do not believe they are going to be accountable for their actions, this practice will continue.

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From: <Cheryl_L_Gasti@glic.com>
To: FCCMAIL.SMTPNLM("slamming@comments.fcc.gov")
Date: 8/21/97 3:23pm
Subject: Slamming

Yes, just as the testimony stated about this going on, I am just another one to add to the list. I tried to call long distance on July 2, 1997 and received a recording that I have reached a private network and did not have authorization. We have two lines in our home and only the primary line (which is listed in the phone book) was changed. I contacted MCI, my current carrier, and they had me as no longer a customer of theirs. They recommended call Bell Atlantic since they are the ones who make the switch. Bell Atlantic gave me the change request that was authorized by a carrier 10732 which is not AT&T but a reseller of AT&T. I did not authorize this change and was charged \$5.00 for the switch and \$5.00 again to switch back to MCI, which MCI reimbursed. The biggest problem was that I was without direct dial long distance for 5 days. I had to dial an access code before dialing long distance. Bell Atlantic has placed a block on my lines to avoid this from happening again without authorization. I spent 2 days trying to get this straightened out and many phone calls to each of the phone companies. I even tried to find the company that changed me through the internet but had no luck there either. Thanks to Bell Atlantic for allowing consumers to place the block on their lines (hopefully this will eliminate the slamming).

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94-129

From: Mary Carmel <carmel@allwest.net>
To: FCCMAIL.SMTPNLM("slamming@comments.fcc.gov")
Date: 8/21/97 4:11pm
Subject: Basic 1 Long Distance Company

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Hello,

I just received a telephone call 2 weeks ago from Basic One Long Distance Company. I thought it was US WEst making the call. They would have changed my service without my consent fromm AT&T by my making a statement that I wanted to continue with a single billing statement from US West. The person was doing some pretty fast talking. I was quick enough to ask who was my long distance carrier going to be. The response was "Basic One".

I worked for the phone company, my husband still does, and they almost got me. These practices are deceptive and fraudulent. The large corporations would have been "slammed" for doing it. I think these companies should be put out of business, not just fined.

thank you

Mary Becker
204 Broken Circle Dr.
Evanston, WY 82930
(307) 789-8706

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From: Win Connecticut <winct@snet.com>
To: FCCMAIL.SMTPNLM("slamming@comments.fcc.gov")
Date: 8/21/97 4:36pm
Subject: Agreement with FCC Proposal

I believe the FCC should come down hard on carriers who slam customers' telephone accounts. These carriers should not only compensate the consumer for the amount of phone charges that they wrongfully billed to them, but they should also compensate at the same level the company from which the customer was slammed. In addition, the fine per occurrence should at least \$100,000 if it has been proven that the carrier did not follow the proper verification procedures before initiating the switch order. This fine should not be imposed if the slam was the result of an inadvertant human error (i.e. transposition of numbers in a telephone number). What about using this money towards the Universal Service Fund or Internet for the nations' schools? Companies should be made financially accountable for incidents of fraudulent signatures on LOA's and misleading telemarketing tactics that result in them switching a customer's long distance without the customer realizing to what they are truly saying "Yes."

What also concerns me is when carriers enter the local market with full force, consumers have no protection from being slammed. There is no local carrier protection block for dial tone. This leaves consumers very vulnerable.

As you can see, I take a hard line on this issue. I happen to work for a local exchange carrier who prides itself on honesty in doing business. We had to fight hard for getting somewhat of a level playing field in intrastate toll regulatory area. Slamming ends up costing the slammee alot of money - not only in the lost revenue from calls but the computer, service order and manpower expenses associated with our winback efforts. The company's time and money can be better spent on improving technology and keeping rates low - rather than trying to winback the customers who didnt want to leave us in the first place!

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