



**Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia**  
**Office of Consumer Services**  
**1333 H Street, N.W., 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, East Tower**  
**Washington, D.C. 20005**  
**(202) 626-5120**

[www.dcpssc.org](http://www.dcpssc.org)

*People Serving the Community...*

**Business Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., Monday – Friday**

## CONSUMER ALERT: CRAMMING

“Cramming” is a term used to describe the practice of placing unauthorized, misleading, or deceptive charges on consumers’ telephone bills. Companies that engage in cramming rely heavily on consumer confusion over telephone bills that mislead consumers into paying for services that were not authorized or received.

### EXAMPLES OF CRAMMING CHARGES

- ? Charges for services that were not requested or authorized by the consumer;
- ? Charges for services that are explained on the telephone bill in general terms – such as “service fee,” “service charge,” “other fees,” “voice mail”, “mail server,” “calling plan,” “psychic,” and “membership”; and
- ? Charges that are added to consumers’ telephone bills every month without a clear explanation of the services provided – such as “monthly fee” or “minimum monthly usage fee.”
- ? Such charges may be for legitimate services, but only if they have been authorized by the consumer or regulatory authority.

### HOW CRAMMING CHARGES OCCUR

The local telephone company, in addition to providing local service, often bills its customers for services provided by other companies.

### HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Review your telephone bill every month and ask yourself the following questions:

- ? “Do I recognize the names of all the companies listed on my bill?”
- ? “What services were provided by the listed companies?”
- ? “Does the bill include charges for calls I did not place and services I did not authorize?”
- ? “Are the rates charged by each company consistent with the rates that the company quoted to me?”

### IF YOU HAVE BEEN CRAMMED

Call the company that charged you for the calls you did not place or for services you did not authorize or use. Ask the company to explain the charges. Request an adjustment to your bill for incorrect or unauthorized charges. Call your local telephone company about cramming charges billed by that company.

Explain your concerns about the cramming charges to your local telephone company and ask them to explain their procedures for removing incorrect charges from your telephone bill, and you should file a complaint with the proper regulatory agency.

### HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT

For cramming charges on your telephone bill for non-telephone services, you should file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). An example of non-telephone service is a charge for psychic hotlines. To obtain information about how to file a complaint with the FTC, call the FTC’s Consumer Response Center at (877) 382-4357, or write to the Federal Trade Commission, Public Reference Branch, Drop H240, Washington, D.C. 20580.

For complaints regarding telephone-related services provided within the District, please call the District of Columbia Public Service Commission’s Office of Consumer Services at (202) 626-5120.

Regarding interstate or international telephone services/calls, you should file a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Complaints must be filed with the FCC in writing at:

The Federal Communications Commission  
Common Carrier Bureau  
Consumer Complaints  
Mail Stop Code 1600A2  
Washington, D.C. 20554

**MORE QUESTIONS?  
NEED MORE INFO?  
CALL 202-626-5120 or  
VISIT US ON THE WEB at  
[www.dcpssc.org](http://www.dcpssc.org)**