



*People Serving the Community...*

## 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, DC 20005  
(202) 626-5120

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

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

### How To Choose A Telephone Service Provider

This fact sheet is designed to help you evaluate your use of telephone services, sort through the offers you're likely to receive, and make some sensible decisions.

#### **Basic & Toll Services:**

You may not be aware that your phone bill may list charges for three different types of telephone service: Local, regional toll, and long distance toll service.

The local calling area includes Fairfax and Arlington counties, Alexandria, most of Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties, and the District of Columbia.

To reach toll service, you dial "1" + area code + 7 digits. You may have a different toll provider for toll service calls to nearby Virginia and Maryland that is outside of the local calling area and another toll service provider for the rest of Virginia, Maryland and beyond.

#### **Getting Started:**

Consider your current calling habits and costs for local, regional toll and long distance toll service by reviewing your telephone bills over the last three to six months. Also ask yourself:

- ? What is included in my basic local telephone service? What services cost extra? Do I expect my needs to change?
- ? Which company currently provides my local service, my regional toll service, and my long distance toll service?
- ? What do I pay now for local, regional, and long distance telephone service?

#### **How to Protect Yourself:**

Review all mail and telephone offers for telecommunications services carefully. Be aware of deceptive sales techniques:

- ? **Huge discounts.** Some companies may try to entice you to switch to their service by offering "great discounts." These companies often compare their rates to the highest rates of well-known carriers rather than the rate that you

currently have, and they may charge a hidden monthly access fee.

- ? **Package deals** Some companies may offer discounts if you buy a package of services. Consider your calling needs and patterns. It may be cheaper to buy only the individual services you need.
- ? **Fine print.** Some companies include their minimum monthly fees or other charges in the fine print of their promotional materials. Read the fine print before signing up for or using a company's service.
- ? **Verification gimmicks** Some companies may call you to offer a great deal on one service, but when you are connected to a "verifier" to complete the sale, the verifier may try to sell you additional services. Be sure you understand the deal you have agreed to before you are transferred to a verifier.

#### **How to File a Complaint:**

Regarding telephone-related services provided within the District, please call the Public Service Commission's Office of Consumer Services at (202) 626-5120.

Regarding long distance complaints, you should file a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Complaints can be filed with the FCC in writing at:  
FCC Common Carrier Bureau  
Consumer Complaints  
Mail Stop Code 1600A2  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Complaints can also be sent via e-mail to [fccinfo@fcc.gov](mailto:fccinfo@fcc.gov) and can be filed online at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html>. You can also call the FCC, toll-free, at 1-888-225-5322; 1-888-835-5322 TTY (8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. ET). Faxed complaints can be sent to 1-866-418-0232.

**(Over)**

### Comparing Services:

Ask the following questions of each company that you are considering:

- ? Is there a monthly charge, monthly minimum charge, or per-use charge for any service?
- ? Do I have to commit to use your company's service for a certain period of time? Is there a fee for canceling early?
- ? How does your company handle inquiries and complaints for each of the services you provide?
  - 1) Is there a 24-hour customer service department?
  - 2) Are customer service calls toll-free?
  - 3) How will I be billed?
  - 4) Who do I call for repairs?
  - 5) Is there a discount for buying several services from the company?
- ? If you need the services stated below ask the appropriate question.
  - 1) Are there special services for customers with vision, speech, or hearing problems? If so, what are they and how do they affect my bill?
  - 2) Are there discount telephone services available for low-income consumers?

### Certified Local Exchange Carriers (CLECs) Providing Residential Service as of March 17, 2006\*

	Company	Customer Service Telephone Number
1	1-800-Reconex, Inc. d/b/a USTel	800/418-6020
2	Access Point, Inc.	919/851-4838
3	ACN Communication Services, Inc.	906/227-7402
4	ATX Licensing, Inc. d/b/a ATX Telecommunications Services	610/755-4180
5	Excel Telecommunications, Inc.	972/478-3327
6	LightWave Communications	301/953-9300
7	Starpower Communications, LLC	877/782-7769
8	Trinsic Communications, Inc.	251/368-8600
9	VarTec Telecom, Inc.	972/478-3327

\*Only Verizon and 3 CLECs are offering residential customers local telephone service only (not prepaid). The 3 CLECs are Excel, Vartec, and MetTel. The nine companies listed offer local telephone service when bundled with other services such as long distance, Internet or cable TV.

**MORE QUESTIONS?**

**NEED MORE INFO?**

**CALL 202-626-5120**

**or**

**VISIT US  
ON THE WEB at**

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