



Consumer Alert

Are Away-From-Home Telephone Calls Costing You Too Much?

Have you ever received a telephone bill with high charges for use of an **Operator Service Provider (OSP)**? An OSP is a company that connects and bills for calls placed from pay phones and through phone systems in hotels, hospitals, airports, etc. OSP rates are often much higher than the major long-distance companies' rates. An OSP serving a public telephone generally will handle a call if a "0" (zero) is dialed before dialing any other number.

OSPs are used primarily when placing telephone calls with a calling card, calling collect, and third-party billed calls. OSP charges typically appear on your telephone bill under "other charges" and may be associated with a company name you do not recognize.

What can you do to protect yourself?

- Listen for the OSP's recorded message giving the option to get price information prior to the connection of the call. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules require each OSP to identify itself and orally notify callers of their right to obtain rate quotations for interstate calls before the call is connected and billed. Customers can press a button, such as the # (pound) key, or stay on the line to hear the per-minute charge and other fees or surcharges applicable to the call charged by the OSP. After hearing the information, callers can hang up without incurring any charges.
- Use the toll-free number or access code of the long distance telephone company you want to handle your long distance call. To obtain the access code or toll-free number of a preferred long distance company, contact the long distance telephone company directly. OSPs are required to permit use of toll-free numbers or access codes.

Here's how to get help!

Questions or complaints regarding OSP charges can be directed to the FCC.

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries & Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554
888.225.5322
www.fcc.gov/cgb/

