



# Consumer Alert

## Casual Calling Rates



### Make Sure Your Long-Distance Telephone Calls Are Not Billed At Too High A Rate

Some people like a casual approach to events. But no one likes to be billed at a "casual calling" rate for long-distance telephone calls – where costs can be more than \$2.00 per minute! Telephone companies usually assess the casual calling rate to "non-subscribers" – those who are not on the company's billing system. Calls billed under this rate are usually at a company's **highest rate**.

The following circumstances could result in a customer's long-distance calls being billed at a casual calling rate:

- ▶ You forget to select a long-distance company when you move, order an additional telephone line, or remove a temporary block of long-distance service.
- ▶ You make long-distance calls during a period when you are "between" long-distance companies. For instance, you decide to switch to a different long-distance company and the switch is not completed immediately. For that period of time, long-distance calls may be billed at "casual" rates.
- ▶ You use a telephone line to connect your computer to an Internet Service Provider (ISP), and your ISP changes the dial-in number to a long-distance number without your knowledge. Or, after notification of a number change, you fail to check and make sure the new number will not result in long-distance calls to your ISP.
- ▶ You use a 10-10 dial-around service without proper enrollment or registration. Note: This type of service allows you to choose a specific long distance carrier for a call.
- ▶ You place an international call and your long-distance calling plan does not include international calls.
- ▶ You use a directory assistance speed-dial service that automatically places a long-distance call for you – not knowing which company will handle the call, or at what rate.

### How To Avoid Casual Calling Rates

- ✚ When moving, contact your local **and** long-distance telephone companies and set up your accounts and calling plans for your new residence or business. If you have a new line installed in an existing home or business, make sure the long-distance service for the line is with the company you prefer and the rates correspond to your calling plan.
- ✚ When returning to full service after long-distance service has been blocked for nonpayment, contact your local **and** long-distance companies to make sure you are returned to your preferred long-distance company and calling plan.

- If you switch long-distance companies or calling plans, contact the new company within 7-10 days and verify that the change is in effect. If you have several phone lines in your home or business, confirm that the switch has been made on all lines.
- Always verify the need for pre-registering before using a 10-10 dial-around service to place a long-distance call. Some dial-around services require pre-registration.
- Before placing an international call, check with your long-distance company to make sure your calling plan covers such calls.
- Avoid using a directory assistance service that offers to speed-dial the long-distance number for you. Your call may be carried by an unfamiliar long-distance company at casual calling rates.

**Always carefully review your telephone bill each month to make sure all charges are proper. Make sure your local and long-distance calls are billed by your preferred long-distance company and according to your chosen calling plan.**

