

Know Your Local Telephone Calling Area



spotlight

Most of us place calls that are either local or long distance. Long distance calls are usually billed on a per-minute basis while local calls are made within a geographic area or exchange and have no costs beyond the monthly basic local exchange fee. How can you know whether a call you are about to place is local or long distance? Some phone number prefixes (the first three digits of the seven-digit telephone number) may be familiar -- others may not. New technology and other changes in the telecommunications industry are making things confusing. The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) encourages you to know your local calling area to avoid unexpected long distance charges.

Examples Of Confusion Relating To Local Calling Areas

- In the Detroit, Grand Rapids and Pontiac areas, calls that fall between local calling and long distance are billed as **zone calls**. These calls are billed on a per-minute basis and telephone directories do not identify prefixes that are billed as zone calls.
- Some Michigan telephone customers are now able to change local telephone companies without changing their telephone number. However, different telephone companies may provide different local calling areas. A switch to a new company may result in a smaller or expanded local calling area.
- A call placed to a cellular telephone only one block away may be a long distance call if the cellular telephone's rate center is outside your local calling area.
- In some areas, a new area code is added to the same geographic area that is served by an existing area code. For example, while you retain the old area code, a new neighbor could receive the new area code. Once the new area code is in place, all customers will need to dial 10 digits to place a local call. These calls are still local and long distance charges will not apply.

What To Do

- To determine if a telephone number is within your local calling area, call your local telephone company and verify that the number is local. There is no charge for this call.
- AT&T's website, www.sbc.com/lca, provides a look-up guide to determine what numbers (prefixes) are included in a customer's local calling area. The site provides local calling area information for AT&T service territories and, depending on location, local calling area information for some non-AT&T areas.
- When someone gives you a cellular telephone number he or she can be reached at, ask what city the cellular service rate center is based from, and whether or not it will be a long distance call for you.
- As new technology and competition arrive in the telecommunications industry, it will be increasingly important to know your local calling area to avoid unexpected charges.

Remember: Telephone companies bill customers for any and all calls that are made on its network. Each customer is responsible for knowing what is and is not a local call.