

## Anti-Slamming Rules Protect Consumers



spotlight

Slamming is the practice of illegally switching a consumer's telephone service without his/her permission. This illegal switch can occur for local services as well as long distance. The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) have issued rules to protect consumers from having their telephone service slammed.

### Authorized Switching Methods

Your telephone service cannot be switched legally from one company to another unless one of the following methods is used to initiate and verify the switch<sup>1</sup>:

- The company obtains your authorization via a signed letter provided by the new company, which indicates in writing, that you want to switch ;
- The company has an independent third party verify your oral authorization to switch;
- The company provides you with a toll-free number to call to confirm the request for switching;
- The company obtains your verbal authorization through use of a three-way conference call between you, your local telephone company, and the new company, in which no confidential or proprietary information is disclosed. **Your local phone company is prohibited from trying to persuade you not to switch companies or from marketing other services during this call.**

### Slamming "Block"

Your local telephone company must offer to enroll you in a slamming protection program where a "block" can be placed on your local toll and long distance services— preventing an unauthorized switch.<sup>2</sup> If you elect this protection, and decide later to make a switch, you can do so through the verification procedures previously indicated.

<sup>1</sup>Michigan Telecommunications Act (MTA) - Section 505

<sup>2</sup>Title 47 Code of Federal Regulations - Section 64.1190

<sup>3</sup>MTA - Section 506

### Penalties

- The MPSC may fine telephone companies for slamming offenses under Michigan law if it is determined, after a formal hearing before the MPSC, that a customer has been slammed.<sup>3</sup> The MPSC can award slammed customers with recovery of damages – based upon findings from evidence presented at the formal hearing.
- A company in violation of slamming rules could lose its license to provide service in Michigan.

### If Your Telephone Service is Slammed

Call the local and long distance companies you want to do business with and explain:

- you did not request the new service;
- your service must be reconnected to your authorized company;
- you want to be returned to the rate plan you were on before the slam.

Call the company that slammed you to cancel the account and you want all charges billed at the rate you would have paid the authorized company. If you are not satisfied with the response from your authorized company or the slamming company, contact the MPSC at 800.292.9555, or file a complaint at [michigan.gov/mpsc](http://michigan.gov/mpsc).

If a customer's telephone service provider is changed for any reason, the MPSC requires the local company and the new company notify the customer within 10 days of the date of the change.

