

South Carolina Telephone Subscriber Bill of Rights

The South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff wants telephone utility customers to know their rights and responsibilities and whom to contact for assistance when they have questions or problems regarding regulated telecommunications service(s).

BE AN INFORMED CUSTOMER. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.

1. As a general rule, you have the right to establish telephone service if you satisfactorily establish your credit and neither you nor any member of your household is indebted to the telephone utility, if you provide the telephone utility with necessary and reasonable access to your property, if you are within the operating area of the company, and if your utilization does not pose a hazardous or dangerous condition. If you have any questions concerning your right to service, you should contact the telephone utility serving your area.
2. You have the right to advice from your telephone utility as to what facilities and services are available in your area.
3. You have the right to a telephone directory published at regular intervals, listing the name, address and telephone numbers of customers, except public telephone and telephone service unlisted at the customer's request. In the event of an error in your telephone listing, you have the right to request the telephone utility to intercept all calls to the listed number for a reasonable period of time provided existing central office equipment will permit and the number is not in service. In the event of an error or omission in the listing of a customer, such customer's correct name and telephone number shall be in the files of the directory assistance operators.
4. You have the right to establish telephone service if you satisfactorily establish your credit and neither you nor any member of your household is indebted to the telephone utility. You may be required to post a deposit if any one of the following conditions exist:
 - 1) you have had two 30-day arrearages in the past 24 months or you have been sent two or more late payment notices in the past 9 months,
 - 2) you cannot furnish either an acceptable co-signer or guarantor, who is a customer of the utility within the State of South Carolina, to guarantee payment, 3) your gross monthly billing increases, 4) you have had your service terminated by any telephone utility for non-payment or fraudulent use, or 5) the utility determines, through use of commercially acceptable methods, that your credit and financial condition warrants a deposit. You have the right to have all conditions of obtaining service explained to you by the utility's personnel.
5. If you are required to make a cash deposit, the maximum amount cannot exceed an amount equal to an estimated two (2) months (60 days) bill for a new customer or an amount equal to the total actual bills of the highest two (2) consecutive months based on the experience of the preceding six (6) months for an existing customer. If you make a cash deposit with the utility, you have the right to have the deposit returned to you (plus interest at a rate prescribed by the Commission) after two years unless you have had two 30-day arrearages in the past 24 months, or have had service denied or interrupted for non-payment of bills, or have been sent two late payment notices in the past nine (9) months, or have had a returned check in the past six (6) months; or if you discontinue service with the telephone utility.
6. You have the right to pay your bill without incurring late-payment charges if no unpaid balance is brought forward from the previous billing date. If a balance is brought forward, a maximum of one and one-half percent (1½%) may be added to that balance to cover the cost of collection and carrying accounts in arrears.
7. You have the right to a timely and accurate bill. You have the right to receive, upon request, information as to the utility's billing procedures.
8. If equal access is available, you have the right to select the Long Distance Carrier of your choice provided the carrier is operating within your service area.

9. Prior to telephone service being disconnected for non-payment, you have the right to written notice from the telephone utility that you have five (5) days to make settlement on your account. In cases involving abnormal and excessive use of toll service, service may be denied two (2) days after written notice is given to the customer, unless satisfactory arrangements for payment are made.

10. If the telephone utility has overcharged or undercharged you, you have the right to an adjustment as allowed by the Public Service Commission of South Carolina's rules and regulations.

11. You have the right to contact the telephone utility at all hours in case of emergency or unscheduled interruptions in your telephone service.

12. You have the right to have questions or complaints promptly and thoroughly investigated by the telephone utility.

13. If you need assistance with a complaint against your telephone utility that you cannot resolve by dealing with the telephone utility on your own, you have the right to call on the Office of Regulatory Staff's Consumer Services Department. Consumer Services will work with you and the telephone utility in an effort to resolve your complaint. The Office of Regulatory Staff is located in Columbia and can be reached by calling its toll free telephone number, 1 800-922-1531 or, if from the Columbia area, (803) 737-5230 or at www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov.

14. If, after working with the telephone utility and the Office of Regulatory Staff's Consumer Services Department, you are not satisfied with the outcome of this process, you have the right to file a petition against the telephone utility and request a hearing before the Public Service Commission. To file a petition, you must prepare a written statement with the following information: your name and address, the name of your telephone company, a clear and brief statement of the facts surrounding the complaint, and a description of the relief you hope to obtain from the commission. Mail the petition to the Public Service Commission, Chief Clerk/Administrator, P.O. Drawer 11649, Columbia, SC 29211. The Public Service Commission may schedule a public hearing. At the hearing, both you and your telephone company may present testimony and evidence before the commission. After hearing the testimony, the Public Service Commission will make a decision and issue an order ruling on your petition.

The South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff wants to inform you of your rights and responsibilities as a consumer, wants you to understand the responsibilities of your telephone company, and wants you to call upon its Consumer Services Department if you need assistance. This statement gives you a summary of your rights as a customer of a telephone utility. Not all telecommunications services are regulated. More detailed provisions are set out in law, commission rules and regulations, and the tariffs of the telephone utility.

-Revised October 2007