



California Public Utilities Commission

Consumer Advisory

Changes To Your Landline Telephone Service, And What You Should Know

If you are a landline telephone customer, you may have received a notice and a new Service Agreement from your landline phone company explaining prices, service descriptions, and terms and conditions for your phone services.

Reason For The Notice & Service Agreement

Instead of filing prices, service descriptions, and terms and conditions (called tariffs) for phone services such as Caller ID, Call Waiting, and Call Forwarding with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), landline telephone companies may now offer phone services through Service Agreements directly with consumers. In light of competition in the telephone marketplace by new providers, the CPUC allowed landline phone companies to "detariff" their service offerings and to do business in this new way to further promote competition and empower consumers in the rapidly changing telecommunications market.

What Is A Tariff?

A tariff is a CPUC required document that contains rates, terms, and conditions for the services that a telephone company provides to consumers, such as Call Waiting, Call Forwarding, and Caller ID. Phone companies were previously required to file tariffs with the CPUC for approval.

What Is Detariffing?

A landline phone company is no longer required to file tariffs with the CPUC. Instead, the company may enter into Service Agreements with consumers. These Service Agreements contain the prices, terms, and conditions for services. The telephone company must still file tariffs for basic residential telephone service (the dial tone and local service of a residential customer's phone service, exclusive of special options) with the CPUC, but can detariff other types of services, such as Call Waiting, Call Forwarding, and Caller ID.

If Contacted By Your Phone Company, ASK . . .

- What may be the best plan for me based on how I have used phone service in the past?
- What is the total price of the calling plan, including estimated taxes and surcharges?
- Are there any limitations on calling under the plan, such as "limited minutes" or geographic location?
- What is the length of the plan?
- Are there any early termination fees if I cancel service before the term of the contract is over?
- How will I be notified if there are changes to the plan?
- How do I go about resolving any disputes with the phone company?

Your Options

- Shop around for your phone service provider and service plans.
- Understand your needs and carefully review and confirm the price, terms, and conditions for the service to which you ultimately subscribe.
- If your company seeks to raise rates or impose more restrictive terms and conditions under your Service Agreement, you have the right to opt out or cancel your contract without paying early termination fees or penalties within 30 days. You can file a complaint with the CPUC if you have a dispute with your phone company.

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The CPUC Requires Telephone Companies To . . .

Publish on the Internet the rates, charges, terms, and conditions for your service or “bundled” service plans (service that includes features like Caller ID, Call Waiting, etc.).

You can also call your telephone company at its toll-free number on the top of your bill to obtain a copy of such rates, terms, and conditions of your services. In addition, your telephone company must still provide you a notice at least 30 days in advance of any rate increase or of other changes in terms and conditions or discontinuance of existing services.

What To Do If You Have A Dispute

Under detariffing, consumer protection rules continue to apply and your telephone company must still comply with all applicable laws, decisions, and rules.

If you have a dispute that you cannot resolve with your telephone company, you may file a complaint with the CPUC by calling toll-free, Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., at 1-800-649-7570; or file an online complaint at: www.cpuc.ca.gov.

For additional information on how to be a smart telephone service shopper and other related consumer issues, please visit www.CalPhoneInfo.com.



For more information on the CPUC, please visit www.cpuc.ca.gov, or contact the News and Public Information Office at (415) 703-1366 or news@cpuc.ca.gov.

