

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED “CRAMMING” ON YOUR PHONE BILL?

Do you review your telephone bills carefully? Do you see charges for services that you don't remember ordering or that you don't understand? If you do, you could be a victim of cramming, the practice of placing unauthorized charges on your telephone bill.

Cramming comes in many forms and is often hard to detect unless you review your telephone bill closely each month. Many consumers may not know that third parties can place charges on their telephone bills. While some charges may be legitimate charges for services the consumer has authorized, others may be unauthorized and would be considered cramming. While cramming charges typically appear on consumers' local telephone bills, they may also be included on your long distance or wireless telephone bills.

If you think you've been a victim of cramming, call your telephone company to inquire about the charges on your bill. Request that any unauthorized charges be credited to your account. You can also protect yourself from future cramming by asking for a third-party billing block so that no charges from third parties can be placed on your bill. If you have difficulty getting these unauthorized charges credited to your bill, please contact the Public Utilities Commission's Consumer Affairs Division at 1-800-852-3793 or online at www.puc.nh.gov.

The U.S. Senate Commerce Committee conducted an investigation and issued a report on July 12, 2011 on cramming. The report states, "Telephone companies profit from cramming. Over the past decade, telephone companies have generated well over \$1 billion dollars in revenue by placing third-party charges on their customers' telephone bills...Because telephone companies generate revenue by placing third-party charges on their customers' bills, telephone companies profit from cramming." <http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2011/07/cramming-costing-consumers-2-billion-a-year-study-finds.html>

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to address the growing trend of complaints regarding "cramming." If you would like to comment on the proposed rule, you can file comments online. The docket number to reference is CG Docket No. 11-116 and comments are due by October 24, 2011. See <http://www.fcc.gov/blog/unauthorized-fees-whats-hiding-your-phone-bill>. As always, please remember to review all of your utility bills carefully.

The PUC is the state agency charged with regulating the rates and services of utilities operating in New Hampshire. To contact the PUC, call 1-800-852-3793 or 1-800-735-2964 (TDD Access-Relay NH), email us at puc@puc.nh.gov, or check our website at www.puc.nh.gov.

The OCA is an independent state agency representing the interests of residential utility ratepayers. Contact the OCA at 603-271-1172 or oca@oca.nh.gov, or check our website at www.oca.nh.gov.

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