



NEWS

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FCC CONSUMER AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS BUREAU RELEASES QUARTERLY REPORT ON COMPLAINTS AND INQUIRIES PROCESSED *Data Helps Commission, Companies and the Public Track Trends*

Washington, DC – The FCC’s Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) has released the latest quarterly report on the types of inquiries and complaints the Commission has received from the public. The attached report is a tabulation of the most common inquiries and informal consumer complaints received during the first quarter of 2002 on broadcast, cable, wireless and wireline telecommunications issues.

Inquiries are defined as correspondence or communications received at the Commission from individuals seeking information on matters under the FCC’s jurisdiction. Informal consumer complaints are defined as correspondence or communications received at the FCC from individuals who complain about alleged violations of the Communications Act or FCC rules or orders by entities regulated by the FCC.

The statistics show that billing and rates complaints continue to be the largest category of consumer complaints for both wireless and wireline carriers, with corresponding high numbers of consumer inquiries regarding these subjects.

As with previous quarters, relatively few cable-related and broadcast-related complaints were filed with the FCC compared with wireline and wireless filings. With respect to cable-related complaints, billing and rate issues were by far the largest category. Complaints about allegedly indecent radio or television broadcasts continued to be the most common broadcast-related complaints. Because the FCC generally has limited authority over cable service and broadcast programming matters, consumers typically direct their complaints to the cable companies, the local franchising authorities or individual broadcast stations.

With respect to each of the subject areas, these data indicate the volume of inquiries and complaints received at the FCC. They do not include inquiries and complaints made to local and state agencies and the companies themselves. In addition, the FCC’s policy is to encourage consumers to take their complaints directly to the companies involved before filing a complaint with the FCC.

Consumers often submit complaints about matters that are outside the FCC’s jurisdiction and which are more appropriately filed with local or state agencies. In addition, the FCC receives many complaints that do not involve violations of the Communications Act or a FCC rule or order. Therefore, the existence of a complaint does not necessarily indicate wrongdoing by the company involved.

The FCC's rules are designed to make it easy for consumers to file complaints and for the companies to move expeditiously to satisfy or answer complaints. For example, the rules governing accessibility to telecommunications services and equipment by individuals with disabilities permit the filing of informal complaints about accessibility problems or concerns by any reasonable means, including postal mail, the telephone, the Internet, fax transmission and audio or video cassette recording. Consumers without disabilities similarly have the option of using regular mail, the telephone, or the Internet to lodge inquiries or complaints. Inquiries and complaints are accorded the same treatment irrespective of the method used by consumers to file them with the FCC. In some instances, the staff may request additional information or documentation that may be needed to effectively process an inquiry or complaint. Information about the Commission's complaint processes can be obtained by calling CGB's Consumer Center toll-free at 1-888-CALL-FCC (TTY users may call 1-888-TELL-FCC) or by visiting the Bureau's website at www.fcc.gov/cgb

Attached to the report is a subject reference guide that defines each complaint category.

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Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau contact: Thomas Wyatt at (202) 418-1400.

For more information about this or any other FCC matter contact the FCC's Consumer Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322), voice; or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322), TTY; email us at fccinfo@fcc.gov or visit our Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb.