

Satellite television service

Signing up for satellite TV service can be confusing – you should know your rights as a subscriber.

Your basic rights

- You cannot be billed for a service that you have not affirmatively ordered or agreed to.
- The terms of a subscription must be disclosed and may not be misrepresented.
- A satellite dish provider may not automatically renew your subscription without notice unless you are free to cancel at any time without penalty.
- A provider may not charge for disconnection or other fees unless they are disclosed in writing at the time you subscribe.

Subscription changes

A provider may not make any subscription changes, such as a price increase or change in channel offerings, without providing you a written notice at least 25 days but not more than 90 days in advance. The written notice must state that you may cancel any service offering affected by the change without

incurring a cancellation charge or disconnection fee. To cancel your service, you should inform your service provider both orally and in writing.

Service interruptions

- Call the provider immediately to report a service interruption. Find out who is responsible to pay for the service call if necessary. Be sure to record the date and time of the call, as well as whom you spoke to.
- Although the company is not required to provide one, you may also want to request a credit for the service interruption.

Billing disputes

If you receive your bill and find unauthorized charges for services you never agreed to, including pay per view (PPV) movies, contact your satellite provider in writing immediately to dispute the charges. To prevent unauthorized charges, guard your passwords carefully, and monitor who has access to your home and satellite dish receiving equipment. Also ask your provider if they are able to block all or certain types of PPV purchases in the future.

Record keeping

Keep copies of all correspondence and notes of phone calls, advertisements or other promotional materials, any agreements or contracts, bills, the terms and conditions, and disconnection notices given to you by your satellite service provider.

Bundling services

Satellite providers sometimes partner with telephone companies to create bundles which include TV, Internet, and phone services. While bundling services can provide convenience and savings it can also make it more difficult to get service when something goes wrong. When it comes to customer service issues and resolving problems the fact that different services are administered by different companies can make it easy to pass the buck.

When bundling – be sure to find out who is carrying each service, what their rates are, and any contract requirements.

Rentals, condominiums, cooperatives, townhomes, and manufactured homes

An owner or tenant has the right to install a satellite dish or an individually owned antenna in "exclusive use areas." "Exclusive use" refers to areas of the property only the renter may enter and use, such as terraces, balconies or patios. If the area is shared with others or accessible without the renter's permission, it is not "exclusive use."

Under certain conditions, if a common service is available for use by residents, then a private installation may be prohibited provided the signal quality is equal to a privately-owned antenna or a satellite dish and the cost is no greater. Restrictions are permitted to prevent damage to leased property or if there are safety concerns.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulates rules that prohibit restrictions on a property owner or tenant's right to install, maintain, or use an antenna.

Reception of local TV stations

The FCC also permits satellite television services to offer local station programming in a Designated Market Area (DMA) determined by Nielsen Media Research. Satellite TV companies are not required to provide local service, but if they do they must provide all the stations in the local DMA. Check with your satellite TV company to determine your DMA, whether the company offers local programming, and what stations are included.

For further information on FCC regulations, contact:

Federal Communications
Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington DC 20554

Toll-free: 1-888-225-5322

Fax: 1-866-418-0232

Website: www.fcc.gov

E-mail: fccinfo@fcc.gov

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

Bureau of Consumer Protection
2811 Agriculture Drive
PO Box 8911
Madison WI 53708-8911

E-MAIL:
DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov

WEBSITE:
datcp.wisconsin.gov

Toll-free in WI:
(800) 422-7128

(608) 224-4976

FAX: (608) 224-4677

TTY: (608) 224-5058