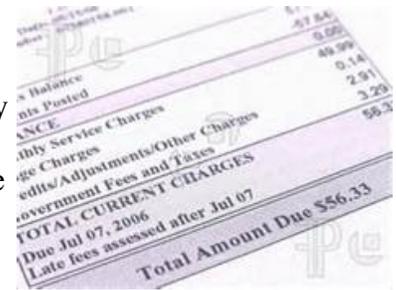


Navigating Your Phone Bill



Increased competition for your telephone service and new service packages continually being introduced is making your phone bill more complicated than ever. To help you navigate your telephone bill, the Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) has created this brochure to explain many of the charges, fees, and taxes you are likely to see on your monthly bill. Be aware that some of the charges can vary from telephone company to telephone company and from telephone exchange to telephone exchange.



Read your telephone bill carefully. Read the list of applicable charges outlined in this brochure.

If there is a charge that you do not understand, call your local telephone company. If you still do not understand, call the Oregon Public Utility Commission Consumer Services Section toll-free at 1-800-522-2404. TTY users call through the Oregon Relay at 7-1-1.

Local Phone Charges

Residential Line Charge

An Access Line Charge is the basic monthly charge for local phone service (dial tone) that enables you to make and receive calls within your local calling area, be listed in the telephone book, get a copy of the directory, and in some cases allows you to make a limited number of calls for directory assistance. You may select a flat-rate (flat-rate service) or may select a flat rate plus per-minute usage charges (measured-rate service).

Extended Area Service (EAS) Charge

Sometimes listed as Extended Area Calling Charge. Replaces per-minute toll charges for calls to some neighboring exchanges, as approved by the PUC. Customers may generally select a flat Rate for unlimited EAS calls to neighboring EAS exchanges (Flat Rate EAS) or may select to be billed on a per-minute rate for all calls actually made (Measured Rate EAS).

FCC Charge for Network Access

Sometimes listed as FCC Subscriber Line Charge, Federal Subscriber Line Charge, Federal Access Charge, Customer Line Charge, FCC-Approved Customer Line Charge, or Subscriber Line Charge (SLC). This per-line charge, authorized by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), helps cover the local phone company's fixed costs of operating and maintaining the local phone network, so customers can make and receive long distance calls.

Optional Services

These are "add-on" services chosen by the customer, such as Line-Backer, Call Waiting, Caller ID, Call Blocking, Paging, etc. Each service, along with the related charge, is shown separately on the bill.

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Long Distance Charges

Long Distance Charges

Lists the charges for all long distance calls provided by the customer's presubscribed long distance carrier. Itemized information on each call is usually provided on a separate page or possibly in a separate billing. It includes the following: the date of the call; the long distance number called; the city to where the call is placed; the starting and ending times of the call; the number of minutes each call lasted; and the charge for each call.

Payphone Surcharge

Sometimes listed as a Payphone Access Fee. This is a per-call fee of about 30 cents that long distance companies may charge on calls made with a calling card from a pay telephone. Not all phone companies list this fee on each call; instead, they may describe the charge elsewhere in the bill.

Calling Plan Charges

Most long distance companies offer calling plans ranging in price from a few dollars to several dollars per month to give consumers more options on international and long distance calling rates. Companies offering calling cards and dial-around plans also may charge a monthly fee to use their services.

Pay-Per-Call Services

These are information and entertainment services provided through 900 numbers, some 800 numbers, and certain international phone numbers. Charges for these Pay-Per-Call services are set by the service providers, not the telephone companies. The rates can vary from as little as a few cents to several dollars per minute. Be careful using these Pay-per-call services.

Federal Telecom Relay Service (TRS)

All carriers providing interstate telecommunications must support TRS, which enables telephone conversations between people with speech/hearing impairments and those without. The Federal TRS surcharge is assessed as a percentage of interstate toll charges.



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Taxes and Fees

Federal Universal Service Fund Surcharge

This surcharge, applied to both local and toll service, recovers the amount that the telephone company contributes to the Federal Universal Service Fund. This federal funding system helps to make phone service affordable to all Americans, including customers with low incomes, schools, libraries, rural health care providers, and those living in areas where the costs of providing telephone service is high.

Oregon Universal Service Fund Surcharge

This surcharge, supplements the federal universal service fund to ensure that high quality and affordable phone service is available to all Oregonians, especially those living in rural areas where the cost of providing telecommunications service may be high.

Federal Excise Tax

Sometimes listed simply as a federal tax, this three percent tax is mandated by the federal government and levied on local and wireless telecommunications services.

Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF) Surcharge

Listed as Oregon Telecommunications Relay Service or Residential Service Protection Fund. This surcharge, which is charged to all customers, is used to provide telecommunications devices and relay services for Oregon residents with speech and/or hearing impairments. This service is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Oregon PUC Fee

This fee recovers the amount that the telephone company pays to the Public Utility Commission to help cover its costs of operations in regulating public utilities. The fee is assessed on all intrastate revenues, including both local service and toll service.

Franchise Fee

Sometimes listed as a Franchise Charge or simply "Franchise", this fee recovers the telephone company's cost of operating in your city or municipality – including fees imposed as payment for the companies' right to place telephone poles and wires along streets and other rights of way. For information about a franchise charge listed on your phone bill, you should call your municipality taxation office – usually listed in the Government section of your telephone directory.

State 911 Surcharge

This surcharge is assessed on behalf of the State of Oregon, to pay for 911 emergency dispatch Service (such as fire and rescue), regardless of whether a household has ever made a 911 call. The fee provides funds for communications systems that support emergency and quick response police, fire and ambulance services with the identification of the phone number and location of the caller.

Miscellaneous Fees

Several long distance companies add miscellaneous fees to the customer bill. These fees get names such as "Universal Connectivity Charge", "In-state Connection Fee", "Bill Statement Fee" and "Carrier Cost Recovery Fee". These miscellaneous fees are not charges required by any government body. You should call the long distance carrier's telephone number listed on the bill to get explanations of these miscellaneous fees.

Access Recovery Charge

The Access Recovery Charge, or ARC, allows incumbent local exchange carriers to recover part of the revenues lost through FCC required reductions to access rates.