Need Help?

If you are having trouble with your telephone service, contact the customer service number for your service provider and try to resolve the situation. The Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC) can help with all billing complaints, while help with service complaints applies only to basic wireline service. The FPSC does not regulate cellular telephone companies.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) does not regulate contractual arrangements with cellular providers, but does handle complaints about wireless service.

Call the FCC at 1-800-CALL-FCC (1-800-225-5322) or TTY 1-888-835-5322 or fill out a complaint form on its Web site at http://www.fcc.gov.

If you have questions, call the Florida Public Service Commission’s Division of Safety, Reliability and Consumer Assistance at 1-800-342-3552.

fax your questions to 1-800-511-0809,
or contact the FPSC by e-mail to contact@psc.state.fl.us.

Write to the Florida Public Service Commission
Division of Safety, Reliability and Consumer Assistance
2450 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850

See our Internet home page at www.floridapsc.com

H O W T O C H O O S E A
Residential Telephone Service Provider

As communication technology becomes increasingly complex, choosing a telephone company for your residential service can be a decision-making challenge. The following steps will help you decide which company is best for your needs.

1. Analyze your phone communication needs before looking at local options:
   ◆ How many calls do you make per day and per month?
   ◆ What numbers are you calling (local, local toll, long distance, international)?
   ◆ What time of day are you calling most?
   ◆ What other services do you want (call waiting, caller ID, speed dialing, voicemail)?
   ◆ Do you also need Internet access or cable television services?

2. Research and compare plans for telephone service providers in your area. Look in the beginning pages of the phone book or the yellow pages for company listings and contact information,
   ◆ What is the monthly telephone service charge?
   ◆ What calls are included in the monthly charge?
   ◆ What are the costs for extra services?
   ◆ What are the taxes?
   ◆ What is the billing procedure?
   ◆ Is a deposit or activation fee required?
   ◆ What are the late payment fees and fees for switching providers?
   ◆ What discounts are offered for combining services such as broadband (Internet) connections and cable television?
   ◆ What is your monthly telephone budget?
   ◆ Which provider can you reasonably afford?

3. What is the company’s service and reliability record?
   ◆ What are the maintenance, repair, and outage policies?
   ◆ Are there additional service costs?
   ◆ What is the availability of the customer service line?
   ◆ Is there a local office or representative?
   ◆ A service hotline?
   ◆ What are the disconnection and reconnection policies?

4. Is emergency 9-1-1 service included?
Choosing a Business Phone Provider

When comparing telephone service plans for your business, plan ahead for possible expansion in two or three years. You could save money by including expansion possibilities rather than later revamping the telephone system. Consider the number of phones, Internet service, fax machines, credit card terminals, and special accessory services needed.

Business telephone systems vary according to the technology used for routing calls. A system’s cabinet is a box where internal and external routing occur and may also be known as a central office or key system unit (KSU). For video conferencing and other computer/telephone applications, computer telephony integration (CTI) options will be necessary.

Small businesses with fewer than ten employees should consider a KSU-less system (no cabinet necessary) in which the routing software is contained in each telephone. You will probably have to install and program the system yourself, with a cost of about $100-$250 per phone.

Businesses with 10-40 employees may find good value and many features in a KSU or key system, which will cost about $300-$1,000 for each employee. Businesses with more than 40 employees should consider a private branch exchange or PBX system that offers more customization and flexibility for upgrades. The initial cost for a PBX system is more costly but has a lower per employee price due to the larger number of lines installed.

Compare plans from several service providers to see which option best suits your budget. Before deciding on a provider, ask detailed questions:

- Who will service any phone problems (the vendor or the provider)?
- What is the cost for installation and who will install the system?
- Will the change be from wireline to wireless, wireless to wireline, or some combination?
- How many local, local toll, and long distance calls are billed in increments of time? For example, with 1-minute billing increments, a call that lasts 62 seconds could be billed as a 2-minute call.
- If you have a home or business security system, make sure the system is compatible with a VoIP setup; since broadband service is powered by electricity, you may lose VoIP service during power outages. If you have a home or business security system, make sure the system is compatible with a VoIP setup; since broadband service is powered by electricity, you may lose VoIP service during power outages.
- Make sure the pricing matches your calling needs. With a flat monthly rate, find out how many local calls can be made for that rate. How will calls be charged after the maximum is reached? Ask if rates will be lower with a calling plan that includes local, local toll, and long distance calls. With a measured rate, calls are billed in increments of time. For example, with 1-minute billing increments, a call that lasts 62 seconds could be billed as a 2-minute call. Look for a plan with the smallest billing increment possible, perhaps as low as 6 seconds.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is a telecommunications technology that allows the user to make phone calls using a high-speed Internet connection (DSL or cable modem), but will not work with dial-up Internet service, satellite, or wireless broadband. With a VoIP system, analogous voice signals are converted to digital data and transported digitally to the receiver, at which time the signals are reconverted back to an analog signal, depending on the receiver’s phone system.

The largest advantage to VoIP is the lower price compared to traditional wireline services. At this time, VoIP providers do not have to pay many of the taxes associated with regular telephone service. Also, as long as you have the VoIP modem and phone adaptor, the service can move with you anywhere. Just be sure to contact your provider before you move.

Since broadband service is powered by electricity, you may lose VoIP service during power outages. If you have a home or business security system, make sure the system is compatible with a VoIP setup; ask how the security system will work in case of an outage. Although emergency 911 services must be supplied to all VoIP customers, finding the caller’s physical location has not always been consistent. Ask about the VoIP provider’s E-911 capabilities.

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Number Portability

To switch service providers, sign up with the new company first. Then contact your old company to let them know you have switched local companies so that your current plan follows along.

If you change service providers, you can keep your phone number whether the change is from wireline to wireless, wireless to wireline, or wireless to wireless.