



Fact Sheet: Operator Service Providers

Operator service providers (OSPs) are companies that connect and bill for calls placed from pay phones and at phone systems in hotels, hospitals, airports, etc. OSP rates are often much higher than the major long-distance companies' rates. However, pay phone users can "dial around" the OSP by dialing in the access code for their carriers of choice.

As required by Montana law, the PSC establishes maximum allowable rates for intrastate OSP calls. The rate caps are set once each year by averaging the operator service and intrastate toll rates of Qwest, AT&T, MCI Worldcom and Sprint and adding 50 percent to each averaged rate. It is illegal for an operator service provider in Montana to bill a customer more than the allowable rate set by the PSC. If an OSP charges more than the rate cap for an intrastate call, Montana law allows the customer to sue the company for three times the cost of the call or \$500, whichever is greater.

The current maximum allowable rates are found [here](#).

In addition to the price protection afforded by the OSP rate caps, pay telephones must enable providers of operator services at these phones to:

1. Post the following information in plain view on or near the pay phone:
 - Name, address and toll-free phone number of the operator service provider
 - A statement that rates are available upon request
 - Dialing procedures for using the phone's operator service provider and instructions for accessing the local exchange company's operator
2. Identify itself to the consumer at the beginning of each call.
3. Provide upon a consumer's request and at no charge:
 - A rate quote for a call
 - Billing and complaint-handling information
 - A toll-free phone number to report complaints
4. Allow a caller to hang up at no charge before a call is connected.

5. Connect the consumer to the local telephone company operator upon request and at no charge, or explain how to do so.
6. Disclose that the OSP's rates will apply when a consumer uses a calling or credit card other than one issued by the OSP and explain how to get a free rate quote.
7. Allow callers to use other available carriers by dialing an access code.
8. Route emergency calls to the appropriate emergency service.

PSC rules also require that certain conditions be met by a customer who connects a pay telephone to a regulated telephone company's line. These phones must:

1. Comply with all applicable local phone company tariffs.
2. Have an FCC registration number.
3. Allow free calls to emergency service (911), the local operator, and 800 service.
4. Return coins if a call can't be completed (on a coin phone).
5. Post on or nearby instructions for use, for registering complaints and for obtaining refunds; owner's name, address and phone number; and restrictions on incoming calls, if any.
6. Comply with state and federal laws on use and access by disabled and hearing-impaired individuals.

