

CHANGING LONG DISTANCE CARRIERS

When you decide to change long distance carriers, contact your new carrier of choice and request service. *(Make sure you understand what rates you will be paying with the new carrier. Carriers post their state-to-state rates on their internet websites. You should ask the carrier to provide you its in-state intraLATA rates.)* Specify whether you want that company to provide you with inter-LATA service, intra-LATA service, or both. (For an explanation of LATAs, see <http://psc.state.mt.us/complaint/ExplainLATAs.pdf>) Your new carrier should explain to you the procedure for switching your service. Most carriers will contact your local phone company for you to get your service switched. Some carriers will give you a PIC code that is specific to each carrier to give your local phone company yourself. In either case your service will not be switched until your local phone company updates its switch to re-route the calls to the new carrier. If you have a PIC freeze on your account you must authorize that it be lifted before the change can go through.

Normal processing time for switching varies from 1-10 business days. If it has been more than 10 business days since your request to change and you still have not been changed, you should follow up with your new company. Until the switch takes place, you remain responsible for charges to your old carrier.

Most local phone companies charge you a fee for switching carriers. Some long distance carriers will refund or credit this switching fee to you – some will not. Some also offer a guarantee that if you choose to switch away from their long distance service they will pay for the switch. It pays to ask about your company's policy.

You can test your phone line to see which long distance carrier is serving as your inter-LATA and out-of-state carrier by dialing 1-700-555-4141. To verify which carrier is your intra-LATA carrier dial 1-406-700-4141. Sometimes this name will not be the company you think you are doing business with. Many long distance resellers route your calls over larger carriers' networks. If you don't hear the name of your new carrier when calling the test number, contact them. Some resellers may provide you an alternate test number to fully verify the service.

After you have verified that your service is successfully switched, it is a good idea to contact your old carrier to cancel your account. Although your local carrier should send notice to your old carrier, it is best to confirm the account is closed to avoid additional monthly fees, minimums, or other continuing charges. Do not cancel your old service **UNTIL YOU HAVE VERIFIED** that your new service is working to your satisfaction. If you cancel prior to verifying your new service you may get stranded without a carrier for a period of time, or with very high "casual caller rates."

Once your account is properly set up with the new carrier you might want to call your local telephone company and request a PIC freeze. This prevents unauthorized switching of your service by another carrier (slamming). You may request a freeze on your inter-LATA carrier choice or your intra-LATA carrier choice.

Keep an eye on your bills (especially when you have recently switched carriers) to verify that your calls are being charged as you expected.