

Comcast fined \$2.3M to end probe into mischarging customers

October 11 2016, by Tali Arbel



In this Sept. 17, 2015, file photo, Comcast trucks are parked in a lot in the company's Westford, Mass. operations center. Government regulators have fined Comcast \$2.3 million, saying the cable giant has charged customers for stuff they never ordered, like premium channels or extra cable boxes. The Federal Communications Commission says the Philadelphia company must clearly ask customers before charging them for new services or equipment and make it easier for customers to fight charges they think are wrong. The company said in a statement, Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2016, that it's been working to improve customer service and that the problems uncovered by the FCC stemmed from "isolated errors or customer confusion" rather than Comcast intentionally mischarging customers. (AP Photo/Tali Arbel, File)

Government regulators are fining Comcast \$2.3 million, saying the cable giant has charged customers for stuff they never ordered, like premium channels or extra cable boxes.

The Federal Communications Commission said the Philadelphia company must clearly ask customers before charging them for new services or equipment and make it easier for customers to fight charges they think are wrong.

"It is basic that a cable bill should include charges only for services and equipment ordered by the customer—nothing more and nothing less," said Travis LeBlanc, head of the FCC's Enforcement Bureau. "We expect all cable and phone companies to take responsibility for the accuracy of their bills and to ensure their customers have authorized any charges."

Comcast said Tuesday that it's been working to improve customer service—it has long had a bad reputation for how it treats subscribers—and that the problems uncovered by the FCC stemmed from "isolated errors or customer confusion" rather than Comcast intentionally mischarging its 22 million cable-TV subscribers.

The FCC's settlement with Comcast, which resolves a two-year investigation, said that some customers complained that they were charged for a service or equipment after they specifically said no to Comcast reps. The agency said there were "many" complaints about "hours-long and repeated phone calls" to try to fix the problem and claims of "unhelpful or abusive behavior" from customer-service representatives, like calls getting disconnected.



In this July 23, 2015, file photo, a man walks past the Comcast Building in New York. Government regulators have fined Comcast \$2.3 million, saying the cable giant has charged customers for stuff they never ordered, like premium channels or extra cable boxes. The Federal Communications Commission says the Philadelphia company must clearly ask customers before charging them for new services or equipment and make it easier for customers to fight charges they think are wrong. The company said in a statement, Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2016, that it's been working to improve customer service and that the problems uncovered by the FCC stemmed from "isolated errors or customer confusion" rather than Comcast intentionally mischarging customers. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer, File)

A Senate investigation this summer had also criticized Comcast and Time Warner Cable, now owned by Charter Communications, for often failing to refund customers who had been mistakenly charged for cable boxes.

The FCC said Tuesday that it's largest civil fine for a cable operator, though likely not too great a financial burden for Comcast Corp., which

recorded a profit of more than \$8 billion last year. The agency has fined other companies larger amounts, such as a \$100 million fine last year against AT&T for slowing cellphone customers' data speeds. The wireless carrier is contesting that fine.

© 2016 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Comcast fined \$2.3M to end probe into mischarging customers (2016, October 11)
retrieved 27 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2016-10-comcast-fined-23m-probe-mischarging.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.