



# Understanding Dial-Around Long-Distance Services

## What's a dial-around service?

The access codes beginning with the numbers 10-10 followed by three other numbers, connect you to a long-distance company that will carry your call. The codes allow you to use a different long-distance company for that particular call, without changing your primary long-distance carrier. The charge for using dial-around services usually appears on your local service telephone bill. Under some plans the cost of the call is the same whether the call lasts for one minute or 20 minutes. The trouble is, many consumers don't know the rate they are paying before they make the call and many services require a minimum usage before the promised discount savings occurs.

## What to know before using dial-around services

If you are considering using dial-around services, the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) recommends the following:

- **Know the dial-around terms.** Remember, not all dial-around services use the same terminology. What some companies call "prime time" (normally the most expensive time to call) may be considered "off-peak" (a less expensive time to call) by another.
- **Don't use dial-around for local calls.** Some local calls require you to dial the area code. If you don't know if a call will be a toll call, contact the operator. Using a dial-around code on a local call may cost you more. You will be billed at the toll rate, even though you could have dialed for free if you have flat-rate local service.
- **Be aware when using dial-around directory assistance.** This service, such as 10-10-2000, can connect you to a telephone number much like

traditional directory assistance. However, there are some issues to consider. For example, you can be charged even if the call is not completed or if the telephone number given is incorrect.

- **Be careful using dial-around numbers on nights and weekends.** When you consider the surcharges and minimums, the per-minute rate offered by dial-around services may not be much cheaper than your regular long-distance company if you are on a calling plan.
- **Determine your calling patterns.** When do you make long-distance telephone calls? Where do you call? How long do you talk? Answering these questions can help give you a sense of whether dial-around calling will best suit your household's needs.
- **Be aware of any surcharges and monthly fees.** Before using a 10-10 dial-around service, read the fine print contained in its advertisements and call the company offering the service to ask about any additional charges that may apply.

## Investigate before you dial

It may be helpful to contact a service that can compare long-distance plans. One such resource can be found at [www.abeltolls.com](http://www.abeltolls.com) which offers extensive information on several dial-around pro-



*continued on other side*

> *continued from other side*

viders and long-distance plans. Or, you can always call a few long-distance companies and do your own research.

## **Read your telephone bill**

The OCC recommends that consumers read their telephone bills carefully each month. The Federal Communications Commission requires that all new services be “clearly and conspicuously” indicated on consumers’ telephone bill’s each month. If you

see any unfamiliar names or charges that you did not authorize, you should call the company issuing the charges or your local telephone company to have the charges removed. If you have questions about dial-around services call the OCC toll free at 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622).

**Be careful when using dial-around services.**

**What could seem like a good deal for placing long-distance calls may actually end up costing you more than your regular long-distance company. Also, be wary about entering prize giveaways from dial-around companies. You could be unintentionally authorizing the switch of your long-distance company.**



The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts. The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues and resolves complaints from individuals. To receive utility information, brochures, schedule a presentation or file a utility complaint, residential consumers may call 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622) toll free in Ohio or visit the OCC website at [www.pickocc.org](http://www.pickocc.org).

*The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.*

**For additional information from the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel:**

**Call: 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622) toll free or (614) 466-8574**  
**Write: 10 West Broad Street, 18th Floor, Columbus, Ohio 43215-3485**  
**E-mail: [occ@occ.state.oh.us](mailto:occ@occ.state.oh.us) • Internet Address: [www.pickocc.org](http://www.pickocc.org)**