

Consumer Rights



A guide to help you get satisfactory results to your cable complaints.

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County Executive

Minimum Standards of Service that Cable Operators Must Provide to Consumers

Cable companies provide television and telecommunications service to residents throughout Montgomery County. High-quality cable service is a necessity for many residents to enjoy quality entertainment and education, and for effective communication with government, businesses, and family members.

As a resident of Montgomery County, you are entitled to certain minimum standards of service from your cable service provider:

- The cable company should have enough telephone lines so that no more than 3% of incoming calls will get a busy signal.
- During normal business hours, your phone call should be answered within 30 seconds, and you should be transferred to a live service representative within another 30 seconds.
- After-hours calls to the cable company may be taken by an answering machine, but you should get a return call from a customer service representative by the end of the next business day.
- After you notify the cable company of a service interruption, the company must make every effort to restore your service within 24 hours if the repair work can be done without entering your premises, or within 3 days if the work will require access to your premises.
- Billing inquiries and requests for service (except for service interruptions) should be acknowledged by a customer service representative within 24 hours.
- You may be entitled to a 10% credit on your monthly bill for each day a service interruption continues if the company is unable to repair your service during a scheduled service appointment.
- You must be given reasonable advance notice of any expected service interruption that will occur due to planned maintenance operations.
- The cable company must give you at least 10 working days written notice if it intends to disconnect your service because of a delinquent subscriber account, with the phone number to call to arrange payment or resolve disputes prior to disconnection.
- The cable company must provide you with a written description of its billing and complaint procedures, including the address and telephone number of the Montgomery County Cable Office, which is responsible for overseeing the cable franchises.

If you subscribe to cable modem service:

- Most of the standards for cable modem service, although not identical, are very similar to those listed above for cable TV service. The internet access service standards are set forth in the Code of Montgomery County Regulations, COMCOR 11.04A.01. You should note that performance standards pertaining to email, and the speed of uploads and downloads are not regulated.

If your question or complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved:

- Start by contacting your cable provider.
- If you are still not satisfied, contact the Cable Office (see reverse). The Cable Office is the local authority for the cable franchises that govern the operation of cable companies in Montgomery County. The Cable Office assists subscribers and is effective in resolving most complaints quickly.
- If you are still not satisfied after 30 days, you may file a complaint with the Montgomery County Cable Compliance Commission. The Commission can award payments to customers from the cable companies for all services including cable TV and modem service. The Commission can be contacted through the Cable Office.

Good Practices:

- Keep a personal log of all problems and interactions with your provider.
- Talk to your neighbors. If you find that your neighbors have problems similar to yours, this information is significant in getting your problems resolved.
- Do not ignore poor service. It may not disappear on its own.

Most Common Problem: Billing

Historically, about half of the complaints received by the Montgomery County Cable Office are related to billing problems. Before small billing discrepancies or inaccuracies grow to become big problems, make sure you:

- Read all charges on your bill.
- Question any charges you do not understand or recognize.

- Verify that your previous month's payment has been received and credited.
- Observe bills that start or end a promotion to verify you received the new rate.
- Request credits for service outages and ask for a record number to track your request.
- Verify that you were credited for outages in the previous billing period.
- Weigh the convenience of automatic bill payment against the opportunity to review your bill before you pay.
- Pay your bill by the due date to avoid negative credit reporting.
- Receive 10 days notice prior to a service disconnection.
- Resolve your billing dispute in writing.

The Cable Office—Working for You

The Office of Cable and Communication Services ("Cable Office") of the Montgomery County Department of Technology Services can help you resolve your cable-related complaint with your provider, by following these steps:

First, Contact Your Provider

Comcast: (301) 424-4400
www.comcast.com

RCN (Starpower): (800) 746-4726
www.rcn.com

Verizon: (888) 553-1555
www.verizon.com

Second, File a Formal Complaint

If you are unsatisfied with your service provider's answer or resolution, and you do not live in the City of Gaithersburg, you may file a complaint with the Cable Office:

Office of Cable and Communication Services
100 Maryland Avenue, Suite 250
Rockville, MD 20850
(240) 773-2288

Residents in the City of Gaithersburg should call the City Manager's office at (301) 258-6310.

Send an email to:

catv.complaints@montgomerycountymd.gov
or submit an electronic form at:
<http://montgomerycountymd.gov/cable>

If you are not satisfied with the Cable Office's resolution within 30 days, you may file a complaint with the Cable Compliance Commission.

This brochure is provided to you as a community service by:

Montgomery County Office of Cable and Communication Services, and the Montgomery County Cable and Communications Advisory Committee (CCAC)

Researched, written and edited by the CCAC

For more information regarding your consumer rights, contact any of the following:

Montgomery County Cable Office

Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer

Federal Communications Commission
www.fcc.gov

Residents of the City of Gaithersburg may contact the city government
www.gaithersburgmd.gov