



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## PUBLIC UTILITIES REGULATORY AUTHORITY

### Cable Frequently Asked Questions

#### Who should I contact if I have a complaint about my cable company?

If you have any concerns with your cable service, start by contacting your cable company directly. They can help with programming, billing, rates, and customer service matters. You can find their phone number on your bill. Alternatively, check their website for other contact options like email or chat. [For a list of cable companies in Connecticut and their contact information, you can refer to this document](#), updated as of July 2024.

#### Who should I contact if I can't reach my cable company, or I'm not satisfied with their response to my complaint?

It depends.

1. Public Utilities Regulatory Authority's (PURA) [Customer Affairs](#) can assist with **billing issues, service appointments, or other customer service problems** *after you have made an attempt to resolve these problems directly with your cable company*. In addition, [PURA's Customer Affairs](#) can help with (1) funding for and provision of **community access programming**; (2) cable company access to **multi-dwelling unit buildings** (such as apartments, condominiums, etc.); or (3) the **licensing** of companies who provide cable television services in Connecticut.

You can contact [PURA's Customer Affairs](#) via [web-filed complaint](#), or by [email](#) or [telephone](#).

2. You can file a [consumer protection complaint](#) with the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection if you believe your cable company is engaging in **deceptive business practices** or not following consumer laws.
3. For all other issues, you can [file a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission](#).

## What PURA Does and Does Not Do in the Cable Industry

### **1. Does PURA regulate cable companies?**

No, PURA does not regulate cable companies. PURA is limited to applying state laws in its oversight of cable companies. Because regulation of cable companies is provided by federal law, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulates most aspects of cable companies in Connecticut. You can find many consumer guides and information, including how to file a complaint against your cable company, at the [FCC website](#).

Even though PURA does not regulate cable companies, [Customer Affairs](#) is interested in helping consumers and often provides assistance with cable company billing issues, service appointments, and other customer service problems.

### **2. What is PURA's role in the cable industry in Connecticut?**

By law, PURA has only limited oversight of three specific areas in the cable industry:

- (1) funding for Community Access Providers (CAPs) ([General Statutes § 16-331a](#)) and the distribution of grants from the Public, Educational, and Governmental Programming and Educational Technology Investment Account ([PEGPETIA](#));
- (2) cable company access to multi-dwelling unit buildings (such as apartments, condominiums, etc.) ([General Statutes § 16-333a](#)); and
- (3) the [licensing of companies](#) who provide cable services in Connecticut ([General Statutes § 16-331](#)).

PURA can help if you have questions or issues with any of these three areas. In addition, PURA's [Customer Affairs](#) often provides assistance with cable company billing issues, service appointments, and other customer service problems.

### **3. What does PURA mean by “cable company” and the “cable industry”?**

A “cable company” is a company licensed in the state of Connecticut to provide community antenna television (CATV) services. These services are provided via a system of cables and use a “community antenna” to receive broadcast signals (often from communications satellites). Those signals are then retransmitted via cables to customers in the local area who subscribe to – or sign up to pay for – the services. Different terms that are sometimes used to refer to companies who provide these services include community antenna television company, CATV provider, and [multichannel video programming distributor](#) (MVPD).

The “cable industry” includes all the cable companies and the services and equipment they provide in Connecticut.

### **4. Which cable companies provide services in Connecticut?**

As of early 2024, there are several [cable companies in Connecticut](#), each of which has regional subsidiaries. These companies include Breezeline (formerly Atlantic Broadband), Cablevision, Charter Communications (Spectrum), Comcast/Xfinity, and Cox Communications. Frontier

Communications no longer provides cable TV services in Connecticut; it is instead a video service provider offering video streaming services.

#### **5. Are video streaming services the same as cable TV?**

No. Video streaming services involve the transmission of video files from a server to a customer, usually over an internet connection (also referred to as a broadband internet connection). Video streaming enables users to view videos online without downloading them, and may include TV shows, movies, and live content. Examples of video streaming services include Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple TV+, Hoopla, Hulu, Roku, Vudu, Xumo, and YouTube TV.

PURA does not regulate video streaming services and cannot provide customer service support. If you have a complaint about your video streaming services, you should contact your provider of video streaming service.

#### **6. Is satellite TV the same as cable TV?**

No. Satellite TV is like cable TV in that a signal is sent from a communications satellite to the customer. But, with satellite TV, a satellite dish is usually installed at the customer's location rather than service being provided solely through a system of cables. Examples of satellite TV providers include DirecTV and Dish Network.

PURA does not regulate satellite TV providers and cannot provide customer service support. If you have a complaint about your satellite TV provider, you should contact your provider or [file a complaint with the FCC](#).

#### **7. Why does PURA regulate some areas of the cable industry and not others? Why doesn't PURA regulate satellite TV and video streaming services?**

PURA can only regulate companies and services that the federal or Connecticut statutes and regulations give it the authority to regulate. If there is no statute or regulation that gives PURA the right to regulate, then PURA has no "jurisdiction" over those companies or services.

However, even when PURA does not regulate a company or service, [Customer Affairs](#) is interested in helping consumers. With that in mind, you may find the below information helpful even though it is beyond PURA's jurisdiction to regulate.

### **Helpful Information Not Within PURA's Jurisdiction to Regulate**

Even though PURA's authority is limited in the cable industry, [Customer Affairs](#) wants to provide useful information that may answer common consumer questions. Below are some of the most frequently asked questions PURA's Customer Affairs hears from consumers.

#### **1. My monthly cable bill shows charges for franchise and regulatory fees. What are these?**

There are several types of franchise or regulatory fees that cable companies can charge. Even though they are different fees, they are all sometimes referred to as "franchise fees" or "regulatory

fees.” By law, cable companies pay these fees to state and federal regulators and can seek reimbursement from subscribers through a charge on their bills.

- **Regulatory Fees:**
  - **State Fees:** Connecticut requires payment for state regulatory and licensing fees from licensed cable companies. This fee may be listed on your bill as a “franchise fee” or “regulatory fee.” PURA does not have jurisdiction to change or eliminate this fee.
  - **Federal Fees:** The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires payment from cable companies to offset the cost of federal regulation. This fee may be shown on your bill as an “FCC fee,” “FCC mandated fee,” or “regulatory fee.”
- **Negotiated Fees:** Some costs related to license requirements are negotiated. For example, cable companies are required to set aside channels for public, educational, and governmental (PEG) use. The monies spent to maintain the PEG access studio, equipment, and personnel are considered “franchise fees.” Fees vary based on franchise area, in other words, where the studio and equipment are located, and the services are provided. These fees may be listed on your bill as “franchise fees,” “franchise costs,” “PEG fees,” or “access fees.”
- **Other “franchise fee”:** Sometimes, cable companies refer to charges for gross earnings tax as a franchise fee. Read more about this tax below.

## 2. Is the cable company allowed to charge tax?

Yes. Your cable company can charge (1) Connecticut sales tax and (2) gross earnings tax on the services and equipment provided to you.

Cable companies can charge Connecticut sales tax, which is 6.35%, on the monthly charge for cable services and equipment. This sales tax, which is owed by you as the subscriber, is collected by the cable company and paid over to the state.

Cable companies can also charge gross earnings tax, at a rate of 5%, on the monthly charge for cable services and equipment. The gross earnings tax is a tax on the cable company’s total earnings from providing cable services and equipment to all its subscribers in the state. Think of it like the state income tax you pay on earnings. Your cable company must pay this gross earnings tax quarterly based on its total earnings and is allowed to collect the tax from subscribers based on their portion (or pro rata share) of the total tax owed.

## 3. Is the cable company allowed to charge me a late fee?

Yes, but only if certain conditions are met. In order to charge you a late fee, the following conditions must be met: (1) your account must be considered delinquent, meaning payment has not been received within thirty (30) days from the due date on your bill; (2) the cable company must provide you a written late charge notice; and (3) you must be given eight (8) days from the date the amount becomes delinquent to pay the balance due.

After these timeframes pass without payment, a cable company can charge you a one-time late fee up to eight percent (8%) annually on the balance due. A late fee cannot be imposed on any charge

that is in dispute if you are pursuing a formal complaint procedure, so long as you file the complaint within thirty (30) days from the due date shown on your bill for the disputed charge.

#### **4. What can I do if I disagree with a charge on my cable bill?**

If you disagree with a charge on your bill, you should contact your cable company as soon as possible to file a billing complaint. You are required by Connecticut law to contact your cable company within thirty (30) days from the due date on your bill on which the charge you are disputing appears. Once you challenge the dispute, the cable company is required to investigate and respond with a decision within thirty (30) days of receipt of your complaint.

#### **5. When is payment for my cable bill due?**

Cable companies are required to include a specific due date on your cable bill. The due date must be at least five (5) business days from the date the bill was mailed. You should pay your bill by the specified due date.

#### **6. When is my account considered delinquent for non-payment?**

Your account can be considered delinquent if payment has not been received by the cable company within thirty (30) days of the due date shown on your bill.

#### **7. Is the cable company allowed to disconnect my service for non-payment?**

Yes, but only if certain conditions are met. Your cable company can disconnect your cable service for non-payment if all the following conditions are met: (1) your account is considered delinquent; (2) the cable company has provided you a written termination notice; and (3) you have been given at least eight (8) business days from the mailing date of the termination notice to pay the balance due. Once these conditions and timeframes have been met, your cable service can be disconnected for non-payment.

#### **8. Is my cable company allowed to bill me in advance?**

Yes. Your cable company can bill you up to two months in advance of service.

#### **9. Can my cable company bill me beyond the date of cancellation of service?**

Yes, but only for used service, not for unused service. A cable company is required by law to prorate your bill after service is cancelled, meaning that if you paid in advance up to the end of the billing cycle, they must provide you with a credit for each day of unused service following the date service was requested to be disconnected. The company may send a bill after service has been cancelled for a previously owed balance or for unreturned equipment.

#### **10. What information should I receive before I subscribe to a cable company's services?**

[Connecticut law](#) requires cable companies, upon request, to give potential subscribers a written description of their service offerings, rates, charges (including finance charges and late payment charges), credit policies, billing practices, and complaint procedures before you subscribe. This information must also be provided at the time of initial subscription and annually thereafter, regardless of whether you request the information.

## **11. Why does programming differ from community to community?**

Cable companies are allowed to select the programming they want to carry and to package that programming in a way they determine is best, so long as it complies with the law. Cable companies consider several factors when deciding how to package their programming, including any legal requirements. For example, federal law requires cable companies to include some over-the-air local broadcast channels on the basic service tier. In addition, Connecticut law requires cable companies to provide community access channels.

If you have a complaint about the programming content your cable company provides (or doesn't provide), you should contact your cable company or the [FCC](#).

## **12. Are cable companies required to carry local broadcast programming?**

Sometimes. Cable companies and broadcasters negotiate the terms of providing local broadcast programming. Federal law provides broadcasters the option of either requiring a cable company to carry its station ("must-carry") or requesting compensation from the cable company for the right to carry the broadcaster's station ("retransmission consent").

Many smaller broadcasters invoke their must-carry rights, which involves no payment for the broadcasters' programming. On the other hand, many larger broadcasters choose retransmission consent and negotiate a fee from the cable company for the right to provide their programming to subscribers. When the cable company pays a fee for local broadcast programming, it often passes the fee through to subscribers in the form of a "Broadcast TV Fee" or similar charge.

If the law does not require a cable company to carry a particular local broadcaster's programming, and the cable company and broadcaster do not reach a financial agreement on retransmission consent, then the cable company will not carry the local broadcaster's programming.

## **13. Who should I contact if I have more questions?**

You should always contact your cable company first if you have a question. In many cases, the customer service representatives at your cable company will be able to assist you. The telephone number for your cable company should be on your cable bill. Many cable companies also offer email and chat functions on their websites.

Your cable company can help with questions about most issues, including:

- Programming: for example, if you want a particular channel your cable company is not providing or has dropped.
- Rates, including charges for pay-per-view or pay-per-channel programming.
- Your bill.
- Service outages, repairs, and restoration.
- Connection and disconnection, including disconnection for non-payment.

The [Federal Communications Commission](#) (FCC) can help with questions regarding many issues, including:

- Signal leakage from cable systems, which can interfere with other uses.

- Cable home wiring questions.
- Advertising limits for children's programming.
- Indecency and obscenity in the programming offered by your cable company.
- Understanding federal cable regulations.

The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority's (PURA) [Customer Affairs](#) can help with questions regarding:

- Billing and termination of service.
- Customer service issues, including service appointment problems.
- Use of public, educational, and governmental (PEG) channels.
- Cable company access to multi-dwelling unit buildings (such as apartments and condominiums).
- Licensing requirements of Connecticut cable companies.
- Understanding state cable regulations.

If you have contacted your cable company and the FCC and are unsatisfied with the responses you've received, or still have questions, you can contact PURA's [Customer Affairs](#) for additional information.

You may also want to review the regulations applicable to cable companies in Connecticut at [Conn. Agencies Regs. §§ 16-333-9 through 10a](#).