



FORT CAMPBELL CONSUMER AFFAIRS ALERT BULLETIN

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AMERICANS ARE PAYING TOO MUCH FOR INTERNATIONAL CALLS

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Would you rather spend \$20.00 or \$3.50 on a 10-minute international phone call? The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has determined that many American consumers are making the \$20.00 call because they do not know that they can probably make the exact same call for a fraction of that cost.

Generally, long distance calls are billed by the minute. If consumers have made no advance arrangements with their phone company to participate in a calling plan, and they just pick up their phone and place an international call, they will be paying basic (non-discounted) rates. In addition to offering basic rates, telephone companies offer a variety of other ways to charge international calls. Calling plans, dial-around, pre-paid cards, and call-back services often offer rates that are *much lower* than a company's basic rates. The brochure explains in detail all these options.

K. Dane Snowden, chief of the Consumer Information Bureau, said, "With so many international calls being made on a regular basis, consumers need to have the best information about how to save on those calls. Whether they call a friend in China once a year just to say 'hello,' call a foreign hotel once every two years to make a reservation, or call their family in Mexico on a weekly basis and talk for hours, consumers want to make these calls easily and at the best rates available."

Although rates vary from company to company, here are sample costs for calls to France from the U.S. at basic and discounted rates:

Basic Rate	Calling Plan	Dial-Around
\$1.99 per minute	\$0.17 per minute (\$3.00 monthly fee)	\$0.22 per minute (Plus \$0.10 connection fee)

The FCC advises consumers that, when they are choosing a method for making these calls, they be think about their individual calling patterns and take into consideration different day/night rates; weekend/weekday rates; minimum call lengths; monthly fees and connection fees.

Unless people participate in a discount calling plan, just picking up their phones and placing international long distance calls can be expensive. The spread between basic rates and a discount calling plan is so great that even one, relatively short, call per month can be cheaper on a calling plan.

It is more important than ever that consumers shop around and compare prices for plans, dial-arounds, pre-paid calling cards and callbacks. They have to know and understand their calling patterns and make an informed choice when placing international calls.

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