

Attachment DPS-JP-1.1

Vermont Department of Public Service
Consumer complaint Case Number 2018-CAI-03468
03/27/18

To: Ernie Scialabba SOUTHERN VERMONT Cable CO (escialabba@svcable.net)
From: Melissa Metvler

Consumer:

Service

East Dummerston, VT 05346

Home:

Account Number:

Thank you for your assistance as we investigate this consumer complaint. Below is a summary of the information provided us by the consumer, followed by CAPI's request for action or information. We look forward to receiving your response and appreciate your assistance.

Summary of Information from Consumer:

Consumer stated that since last night they have had just a black screen on channel 25. Consumer tried to call the cable company but he has not been able to get through

Action Requested by CAPI.

This complaint was initially sent to Southern Vermont Cable Co. on March 1, due for a response to the Department on 3/14/18. If I missed the response, could you please resend it? If a response was not sent, please send one as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Melissa Metvler
Consumer Affairs Specialist
Vermont Public Services Department
Consumer Affairs & Public Information (CAPI) Division

Re: Consumer complaint Case Number 2018-CAPI-03468

Phone: (802) 828-4097 Email: melissa.metivier@vermont.gov

3.03

2/17/2020, 2:11 PM

Re: Consumer complaint Case Number 2018-CAP-03468

Subject: Re: Consumer complaint Case Number 2018-CAP-03468
From: Ernie Scialabba <escialabba@svcable.net>
Date: 3/27/2018, 6:03 PM
To: melissa.metivier@vermont.gov

Melissa,

We called the customer on 3/1/18 in the evening at home. We told the customer that the "analog" channel 25 was out due to a country wide update. We were waiting on a new receiver. However, he could still get channel 25 on channels 58-8 SD or 112-2. HD. Both of which are already included in his current package. He wouldn't need any additional equipment. He did not realize that he watch the same programming on digital channels.

Ernie Scialabba
Southern Vermont Cable

On 3/27/2018 11:02 AM, Melissa Metivier <metivier@vermont.gov> wrote:

1 of 1

2/17/2020, 2:02 PM

Subject: Re: Consumer complaint Case Number 2018-CAPI-10009
From: Ernie Scialabba <escialabba@svccable.net>
Date: 12/18/2018, 8:02 PM
To: melissa.metivier@vermont.gov

Customer called in at 7:20 AM said his internet just went out, I checked our network software tools and inform the customer that there was a problem in the area and that we would dispatch a tech and that it would take a couple of hours to find and repair the problem and ended the call. Customer called back at 8:07 AM irate that the service wasn't fixed yet and was told a technician was in route and asked to speak to a supervisor. I told him that I just talked to him and that I told him it would be a couple of hours, apparently he didn't like my answer and hung up. The service was restored to the area including [REDACTED] at 9:46am. End of story!

Ernie Scialabba
President

On 12/18/2018 8:51 AM, melissa.metivier@vermont.gov wrote:

Vermont Department of Public Service
Consumer complaint Case Number 2018-CAPI-10009
12/18/18

To: Ernie Scialabba SOUTHERN VERMONT Cable CO (escialabba@svccable.net)
From: Melissa Metivier

Consumer:

[REDACTED]

Service

[REDACTED]

Dummerston, VT 05301

Home: [REDACTED]

Account Number:

Thank you for your assistance as we investigate this consumer complaint. Below is a summary of the information provided us by the consumer, followed by CAPI's request for action or information. We look forward to receiving your response and appreciate your assistance.

Summary of Information from Consumer:

Consumer has internet service with Southern VT Cable. Consumer pays \$90.00 a month and it isn't working. Consumer stated that the service just went out this morning. Consumer stated that when he called Southern VT Cable he was told it would be fixed in two hours. Consumer stated that when it wasn't fixed in two hours he called back and was told it would be repaired

by 11:00 today. I tried to talk to the consumer about the unregulated nature of internet service and that the State of Vermont doesn't dictate where internet providers are allowed to provide service, but he just kept saying that he pays my salary. I did look the consumer's address up in our database and let him know that Consolidated, ATT Wireless and Verizon Wireless say they provide service to his address. Consumer stated that he had Consolidated and they didn't work. Consumer took the phone numbers for ATT Wireless and Verizon Wireless.

Action Requested by CAPI:

Is there currently an open repair ticket for this consumer? If so, when can the consumer expect this issue to be resolved?

Thank you,

Melissa Menvier
Consumer Affairs Specialist
Vermont Public Services Department
Consumer Affairs & Public Information (CAPI) Division
Phone: (802) 828-4097 Email melissa.menvier@vermont.gov

RE: Schuck (case # 09781)

Subject: RE: [REDACTED] case # 09781)
From: "Paruch, Susan" <Susan.Paruch@vermont.gov>
Date: 1/18/2019, 11:11 AM
To: Ernie Scialabba <escialabba@svcable.net>

Hi Ernie,

Thank you for this information; it is very helpful.

I do have one final question for you. It looks like, in general when there is a credit balance on a customer's account, Southern VT Cable does not send out a bill until there is a balance owed. Is that right?

Or, was that the case only for this consumer?

Thank you for clarifying this. I don't think I need any more information to close this case

Susan

Susan Paruch
Consumer Affairs & Public Information Division
VT Department of Public Service
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2601
800-622-4496
802-828-4015

From: Ernie Scialabba <escialabba@svcable.net>
Sent: Friday, January 11, 2019 9:59 PM
To: Paruch, Susan <Susan.Paruch@vermont.gov>
Subject: RE: [REDACTED] case # 09781)

Hi Susan,

There was a price increase effective 5/1/18. A notice was mailed out to customers. I can't say for sure they did or did not get a copy of the notice. They were sent out regular mail. We manually stuff the envelopes. And some customers were emailed. We do everything we can to make sure customers are notified.

Rate increase notices are sent out prior to rates actually going into effect. We put notice reminders on invoices prior to also. This particular notice was mailed in March.

Active accounts with a credit balance are treated no different with notices. Everyone gets a notice.

The \$1.07 Credit Adjustment was because we couldn't manually get it to balance out with the computer balance. It had to do with the credit we issued for the Phone Vacation mode and .06 cents of it going into the tax and .04 cents going to the Broadcast TV fee and 1.02 going in the Phone Vacation. So we adjusted it to the customer's favor.

We actually started invoicing the customer in December 2018. It was on the invoice with all charges first, then the normal monthly invoicing below it. That states 12/1..12/31. And then January's invoice they received only had January charges.

We have no problem with customer making payment arrangements. We did offer it right from the beginning. We were at some fault here as well. Whatever will work for them.

Thank You, and if you should have any questions, please let me know.

Regards,
Ernie Scialabba
President
Southern Vermont Cable
802-297 2179

On 1/10/2019 2:05 PM, Paruch, Susa wrote:

Hi Ernie,

This information and the attached statements are very helpful. Thank you. And thank you for sending them to [REDACTED]

I noted a few things while reviewing the documentation and I have a couple of questions:

- It looks like there was an increase in the basic cable rate, from \$18.95 to \$21.95. With associated fee increases it brought the total monthly bill amount to \$120.15, effective 5/1/18. Was notice of the rate increase sent to this consumer?
- Is that something that would ordinarily appear on a bill prior to the rate increase?
- For accounts where a credit balance is carried forward for a period of a few months prior to a rate increase (such as this one), how does Southern VT Cable typically provide notice of the rate increase to the account holder?
- What was the \$1.07 adjustment for that appeared on the Dec 15, 2018 attached invoice?
- Will Southern VT Cable begin sending bills to this consumer again this month?

Also, [REDACTED] aren't disputing that they should pay what they owe. They have told me they want to pay Southern VT Cable what they owe. They just wanted to see what they were billed each month to figure out what that amount was.

Additionally, I understand that they were told they could make a payment arrangement to pay off the charges. Thank you for that. Our policy has been that a consumer should be given the opportunity to pay any outstanding unpaid charges over the same amount of time that they were not billed. So, in this case, it looks like bills weren't sent from Oct 2017 through Dec 2018 (15 months); is that right? If so, they should be given the opportunity to pay the balance off over this same amount of time. They may choose not to do this and pay off the balance more quickly, but they should be given this opportunity.

RE: [REDACTED] (Case # 09781)

Thank you again for your help

Susan

Susan Paruch
Consumer Affairs & Public Information Division
VT Department of Public Service
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-1601
800-622-4496
802-828-4015

From: Ernie Sciatappa <esciat@vycable.net>
Sent: Friday, January 04, 2019 12:00 AM
To: Paruch, Susan <Susan.Paruch@vtrmont.gov>
Subject: RE: [REDACTED] (Case # 09781)

Hi Susan,

The customer changed their services from Triple Play (Phone-Internet-Standard Cable TV) with the Digital Showtime Suite, plus set top box, on 8/31/17, and were issued credits through 9/30/17 with a monthly cost of \$156.97.

Their services were changed to Phone, Basic TV, Internet and a monthly cost of \$114.93. They might have been told what their October invoice with the credit adjustments and prorated amounts would be around \$70 some dollars, but we would not have quoted them a new monthly price of \$75.00, when the price of the services they were keeping were already on invoices that they had already received and paid for, for years.

A problem arose when a mistake was made on our part in the billing system and ALL the customer services were put on vacation mode, and remained on vacation mode until a customer service rep noticed while posting a payment on the account, that there was a large credit on the account. It was then determined that the account had been placed on phone vacation mode and invoiced as such, which is \$18.02 a month.

Customer had continued to make a payment of \$75.00 a month creating a large credit balance.

Customer service then went back and corrected the account so it would be properly invoiced the correct services they were receiving and had received. Customer Service also put a note on the invoices (which look like statements) prior to mailing them out asking customer to please call the office when they got the invoices so that it could be explained, and gone over.

Title

2/5/2020, 7:56 PM

Our billing system does not allow us to go back and modify an invoice or make any changes to an invoice once the month has been closed out. It only allows us to make adjustments. Once an invoice prints, wrong or right, that is the invoice. We can make adjustments and issue credits or bills, however until the next month's auto-billing is done, the invoice is not complete. Also on reprints it doesn't print all the information on the invoices. Such as a credit invoice. The customer was never sent another invoice after their account was put on Vacation Phone mode and billed as such, because they had a credit balance. It is not uncommon for a customer to go from season to season on vacation mode and have a credit balance or continue to pay till the next season. This account was just overlooked as not a seasonal customer.

The invoices attached were manually typed. It concurs with the system invoice that was generated for the customer that had the whole total amounts on it. I have attached the invoices and also mailed copies to the customer. It has the detailed monthly charges broken down instead of all on one invoice. Also with these invoices, Also NOT included is the start of the February invoice that shows the payment of \$75.00 posted on 12/29/18, but because it didn't make the cut off time for the January invoice print. (which was December 24th) I just wanted to let you know that they did just pay \$75.00 again, so their ending balance is actually \$794.86 I hope I answered all the questions and if there is any other information I can provide, please let me know. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Thank you,
Ernie Scialabba
President
Southern Vermont Cable

802-297-2179

On 12/28/2018 1:50 PM, Parvati Susan wrote:

Consumer:

[REDACTED]
Newfane, VT 05445
(802) 365-7680

Information from the Consumer:

Cons said they are having a problem with their cable provider. A year ago they dropped cable TV, cons was told she would pay \$75 for internet and phone (although later cons said that she believes she also has to pay for basic cable TV svc in order to get internet). Cons said they hadn't been getting bills but had been sending in payment of \$75 each month. Cons recently received a bill for \$700+. Cons called and asked what amount should have been billed each month and was told around \$125.

(Cons said the \$75/month was a verbal quote; she doesn't have anything in writing and when she asked what exactly she would be billed at the time, she was told to check the first bill; it should show the exact amount cons would be billed each month. It didn't)

Cons asked why they hadn't been getting bills and for So VT Cable to send the missing bills showing the monthly charges. So VT Cable eventually sent statements but they are very confusing and don't show anything close to \$125 or the services cons ordered, although they do show payments made by cons of \$75.

Cons said some of the bills show random charges that she doesn't understand and it's not clear on the most recent statements where the balances comes from. Most of the statements don't show a due date or billing period.

Cons said that So VT Cable offered to set her up on an arrangement to pay the chgs off. Cons isn't necessarily disputing that they owe the money, it's just that she can't tell what she was supposed to have been billed each month and she'd like to know this before she pays.

Cons called So VT Cable recently and asked for itemized statements for each month, to show what was supposed to have been billed and how much was paid. They said that the only thing they can provide is what they've already sent.

Cons sent me copies of the statements.

Action(s) requested by the Department:

Good afternoon Ernie,

Please review the above information as well as the attached statements provided by the cons. It's not clear how Southern VT Cable determined the amounts shown on the final three statements attached above and whether the charges are accurate.

Please advise why Southern VT Cable didn't send the consumer any bills for several months (although payments were made) after a change was made to the account, and why eventually the attached statements (which can't really be called bills) were sent instead.

Additionally, please provide monthly statements showing

- Any balance forward from the prior month
- Current charges for that billing period
- The amount paid by the cons for that billing period month
- The total due for each billing period
- The due date for each bill

If this information cannot be provided, please explain why. And, in the alternative, please provide a spreadsheet showing the above information such that the amount owed on the account to date can be calculated.

Please feel free to provide any other information that would be helpful in

RE [redacted] case # 09781)

understanding or resolving this complaint

Thank you for your assistance.

Susan

Susan Paruch
Consumer Affairs & Public Information Division
VT Department of Public Service
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2001
800-622-4496
802-828-4015

0.014

2/5/2020 7:50 PM

RE: FW: [REDACTED] (case # 02072)

Subject: RE: FW: [REDACTED] (case # 02072)
From: "Paruch, Susan" <Susan.Paruch@vermont.gov>
Date: 10/24/2017, 10:33 AM
To: Ernie Scialabba <escialabba@svcable.net>

Thanks Ernie,

This is very helpful information.

I'll follow up with [REDACTED]

Susan

Susan Paruch
Consumer Affairs & Public Information Division
VT Department of Public Service
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2603
800-622-4496
802-828-4015

From: Ernie Scialabba (mailto:escialabba@svcable.net)
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2017 9:39 PM
To: Paruch, Susan <Susan.Paruch@vermont.gov>
Subject: Re: FW: [REDACTED] (case # 02072)

Susan we had a few calls from [REDACTED] about Ch. 14 and that was all I was aware of. Ch. 14 WBIN, a Boston area independent broadcast station had a frozen picture no audio. This station is handed off to us from Comcast, so I called one of my contacts on Tuesday the 17th and left a message on his cell. He returned my call on Thursday the 19th and had informed me he wasn't sure what the problem was but said Comcast had removed the station a month or two prior to my call, said he would call his boss and try to find out what was going on. In the meantime I did a search on WBIN and had discovered the FCC had auctioned off their frequency and that they would have to relocate to a different channel and at that point decided not to go forward in purchasing a new transmitter and would sell the equipment and programming rights in the coming months according to this particular article. I received a call from another Comcast tech on Thursday and said it was an oversight on their part and they were working on getting us a replacement channel. Received a call on Friday the 20th from Comcast stating that Ch. 14 was back on and that the new channel was WUTF the station that bought the programming rights from WBIN. If we knew ahead of time about this event we would have posted it and put a note on our bills but we didn't receive any notification from the TV station or Comcast.

RE: FV [REDACTED] (case # 02072)

I placed a call to [REDACTED] and informed her that the channel was back on and she confirmed and then started to talk about having no sound on some stations. I told her that it sounds like she had the SAP selected on the TV, walked her through the various menus and shut the SAP off and she had sound back.

I informed her our customer service hours were from 9am to 5pm Monday -Friday and technical support was 24/7 seven days a week. I explained to her that we were having intermittent problems with our 800 number and gave her the local number in case she wasn't able to get through.

If there is any other information you need please don't hesitate to call (802) 297-2175 or email,

Thanks, Ernie

Southern Vermont Cable

On 10/17/2017 2:28 PM, Parrich, Susan wrote:

Consumer:

[REDACTED]
Newfane, VT 05345
[REDACTED]

Information from the consumer:

Consumer is very unhappy with Southern VT Cable. She has the Triple Play. She said that cable TV svc is "terrible." She has called; it doesn't get fixed and cons has no idea whether the company has tried to so. Also no one answers the phone when she tries to call back when svc hasn't been fixed.

Problems with cable TV: Ch 14 is "non-responsive"; all she sees is a commercial that never changes or programming that is different than what is listed on the channel guide. As we were talking the commercial finally ended (it had been like this for days) but the program that came on wasn't what was listed. Another problem is that the audio on PBS is variable; she can hear the program but when an ad comes on there is no sound at all. Consumer said she can turn up the volume as far as it will go and there is no sound. This has been going on for over a month. Cons first signed up for service in August.

Advised that I would follow up with Southern VT Cable.

Action(s) requested by the Department:

Good afternoon,

Please advise regarding what Southern Vermont Cable's records show of contact from the consumer regarding the problems she describes above; what steps Southern Vermont Cable has taken to resolve the problems and dates these steps were taken; and when Southern Vermont Cable will permanently resolve them.

2 of 4

2/5/2020 8:08 PM

Additionally, please advise as to whether there are standard hours for when calls are not answered at Southern Vermont Cable's offices

Please feel free to provide any other information that would be helpful in understanding or resolving this complaint

Thank you for your assistance

Susan

Susan Paruch
Consumer Affairs & Public Information Division
VT Department of Public Service
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-7601
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