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Find

Text Size: A+ A- A

Text Only Site

Accessibility

DOC General Services Division

Department

Search

About Us

Contact Us

DOC Home

Site Map

Director's Office

General Services

Human Resources

Transitional Services

Operations

Public Services

Links

Careers

DOC FAQs

Adobe Acrobat Reader
(download)

Inmate Telephone System (ITS)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

Common Questions and Answers about Inmate Telephones

Ongoing contact with supportive family and friends is an important part of inmates' success in prison and upon release. The Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) is committed to providing the best possible inmate telephone service at the most reasonable cost per call.

This FAQ includes information about the inmate telephone system, answers common questions and offers solutions to common problems. FSH Communications has contracted to provide payphone service to all DOC facilities. The subcontractor used to provide the security and control equipment within DOC facilities is Value Added Communication, Inc. (VAC). The system offers three types of calling programs: Advance Pay (prepaid), collect and debit

How do I put money on an inmate's debit account?

All debit transactions are handled by FSH and their subcontractors. Please contact them at **1 800 592-9488** for detailed information and instructions.

What drives the cost of inmate calls?

The Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS) oversees all state telecommunication contracts. The Oregon Department of Corrections provides input regarding the security features that are required of phone systems within the correctional environment. When phone companies bid on inmate phone contracts, they take operating costs into consideration. Equipment that supports security features for inmate phones can cost millions of dollars. Additionally, the phone company considers the cost of repairs, non-collected bills and fraud when establishing calling rates for inmate calls. Alternative types of calling plans currently offered in the community, if used in the correctional environment, would bypass mandatory security features, so they are not allowed by the Oregon Department of Corrections.

What features on a phone might prevent receipt or disconnect a call?

Three-way Calling: ODOC rules prohibit **any** type of three-way or conference calls. DOC blocks these numbers.

Call forwarding: Inmates are not allowed to call numbers that are forwarded in any way to other locations or to cell phones. DOC blocks these numbers.

The primary reason for disconnected calls is an interruption in the phone signal. This may occur at either end of the connection. Cordless Phones, Cell phone and VOIP lines are prone to this problem. These calls are made at the customer's risk. Refunds will not be made for cut off calls of this type. It is strongly recommended that you do not use a cordless phone.

Cell phones: DOC Rule now allows inmates to call cell phones. Do not set up an advance pay account for cell phones. Using debit is the only option for calling cell phones.

How much will the inmate call cost?

When you answer a call from an inmate who is calling from any Oregon Department of Corrections facility, an automated announcement will ask you if you would like to hear the rates for that call. By pressing the designated number when prompted, a recording will list the **maximum** amount that could be charged for that call. Selecting this option will not disconnect your call and you will not be charged for the time the announcement plays. For debit calls, charges commence once the call is connected. Charges for all other inmate calls begin when you accept the call by selecting the designated number.

How can a call be more cost efficient?

It is less expensive to have one long conversation rather than several shorter calls. Long distance calls have a connection fee plus a per-minute rate. For example, the combined charges for a 20-minute call

are less expensive per minute than the cost of four, five-minute calls. Debit calls are discounted. The best savings in most cases is to purchase debit time.

Why can't I receive inmate calls?

Inmates can only call numbers which are on their personal "Calling list". (Except for the first 30 days of incarceration.) If the number is on the inmate's list there are many possible reasons why you are not receiving calls. The first step is to diagnose the problem and be directed to the appropriate venue to resolve the issue. The VAC system has several prompts that instruct both the caller and call receiver why certain calls cannot be completed. It is important that the call receiver listens to the prompt and give that message to the help desk or repair personnel. Unfortunately, many smaller independent phone companies, known as Competitive Local Exchange Carriers (C-LEC), and some companies such as MCI, AT&T local services, cell phone companies, and all VOIP companies, do not have billing agreements with the contracted service providers for DOC. In these cases, the companies providing local and long distance service to DOC facilities will not allow a collect call to go to that company. The option with the VAC system is for the call receiver to prepay for calls or for the inmate, inmate friends or family to put money on the inmate's debit account. To address phone problems at all DOC facilities, contact the provider listed at the bottom of this page.

My phone company said there were no blocks on my phone. Is the Oregon Department of Corrections blocking me?

Your phone company does not have access to information that will identify who blocked the phone from receiving inmate calls. To identify who blocked a number, call the Oregon DOC'S service provider listed at the bottom of this page.

How do I deal with the credit limit Global TEL-Link and Qwest has on all new users who do not have service with them? (Global TEL-link carries all Inter-LATA calls for the VAC system, Qwest carries all other calls)

Global TEL-Link and Qwest have a monthly limit on collect calls that they will carry to non customers. If you exceed the limit established, they will block further inmate calls on their system for the rest of the billing cycle. You must contact them to increase this limit.

I have an overdue, outstanding phone bill. Can I receive calls from an inmate?

All billing questions need to be directed to the issuing telephone company. Most companies have plans to reactivate your service, with certain restrictions, which will allow you to receive calls. You can usually still receive Debit calls.

How can I block my phone number from correctional facilities?

You may request that a phone block be placed on your number. The items needed are a copy of the page of your phone bill showing the owner's name and phone number and a note signed by the owner requesting that ODOC place a block on your number at all correctional facilities.

Send to:

Oregon Department of Corrections Inmate Phones
2575 Center Street NE Salem, OR 97301

Or Fax to: 503-373-7863 (A cover sheet is not needed)

FSH communications inc. (1-800-592-9488) is the principle service provider for all Oregon DOC facilities. FSH will resolve all repair and debit issues or direct them to the proper agency or subcontractor.

DOC will not answer questions about an inmate's account. Inmate financial and calling list information is not available to the public.

If you have questions that remain unanswered after reviewing this website, you may call the Oregon Department of Corrections' Inmate Phone Specialists at 503-945-9437. You may expect a return call within two business days.



Page updated: March 16, 2009

[Text Only](#) | [State Directories](#) | [Agencies A to Z](#) | [Site Map](#) | [About Oregon.gov](#) | [Oregon.gov](#)

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