



Consumer Guide

Loud Commercials and the CALM Act

Background

Effective December 13, 2012, the FCC's rules require television commercial advertisements to have the same average volume as the programs that they accompany. The FCC established these rules to comply with the directive of Congress contained in the Commercial Advertisement Loudness Mitigation (CALM) Act (www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ311/pdf/PLAW-111publ311.pdf).

What the New FCC Rules Do

The FCC's new rules require TV stations, cable operators, satellite TV operators and other pay TV providers to limit a commercial's average volume to that of the programming that it accompanies. A commercial may have louder and quieter moments, but, overall, it should be no louder than the surrounding programming. This may mean, however, that some commercials will comply with the new rules, but still sound "too loud" to some viewers.

If You Have A Complaint

The Commission will rely on consumer complaints to monitor industry compliance with these new rules. You may file a complaint with the FCC and report commercials that seem louder than the programming that they accompany. The information in your complaint will help the Commission identify possible problem areas and will assist it in its enforcement of these rules. Specifically, the Commission will use the detailed information provided by consumers in their complaints to identify patterns or trends of noncompliance for a particular station, pay TV provider or commercial and investigate and take action, as appropriate.

We recommend that you file your complaint electronically, using the Commission's online complaint form found at www.fcc.gov/complaints. To access the form, click on the Complaint Type button "Broadcast (TV and Radio), Cable, and Satellite Issues," and then click on the Category button "Loud Commercials." This will direct you to file the "Form 2000G – Loud Commercial Complaint." Click on "Complete the form" to submit your complaint online. The Form 2000G has been created to specifically accommodate complaints about loud television commercials. To enable the Commission to evaluate your complaint, you should complete the form fully and accurately.

In order for the FCC to evaluate your complaint, we need the following information:

- State if you watched the commercial on pay TV (such as on cable or satellite) or if you watched it on a broadcast television station using an antenna;
- The name of the advertiser or product promoted in the commercial;
- The date you saw the commercial;
- The time you saw the commercial;
- The name of the TV program during which you saw the commercial;
- Which TV station (by call sign and/or channel number and the station's community) or pay TV provider (with its system location) transmitted the commercial; and
- If you watched the commercial on pay TV, the channel number on which you saw it and the cable programmer or network, such as CNN or HBO.



You may also file your complaint by fax to 1-866-418-0232 or by letter mailed to the Federal Communications Commission, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division, 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20554. If you need assistance in filing your complaint, you may contact the Commission's Consumer Call Center by calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) (voice) or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) (TTY). There is no fee for filing a consumer complaint.

Equipment May Help With Overall Loudness

If you are experiencing problems with spikes in volume across both programming and commercials, you may be able to activate certain settings in your television or home theater system to help stabilize overall loudness. Many televisions and home theater systems have features to control loudness, such as automatic gain control, audio compression, or audio limiters, that can be turned on to provide a more constant volume level across programs and commercials. These functions usually need to be activated through the equipment's "Set Up/Audio" menu.

For More Information

For information about other communications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau website at www.fcc.gov/consumers, or contact the FCC's Consumer Center at 1-888-225-5322 (voice) or 1-888-835-5322 (TTY).

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