



# MOBILE BILL SHOCK

The Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA) has received “Bill Shock” complaints from consumers who had used their communications gadgets (e.g. mobile phones, tablets) while outside Botswana only to find that they have accumulated huge bills. Similarly, consumers who have signed for post-paid/contract with their operators and were using data service while roaming have also experienced some bill shock. BOCRA is concerned by the increasing number of such complaints relating to mobile bill shock.

The term “mobile bill shock” refers to the surprise customers experience when they receive unexpectedly high mobile bill charges. BOCRA has identified the main causes of excessive bills as downloading and uploading data (e.g. movies, music, email and use of social network applications) along with receiving and making calls during international roaming. BOCRA has also realized that consumers are not aware of charges related to data use and international roaming. BOCRA warns consumers to note that in general international roaming charges are more expensive than national or local charges and that the bill arising from international roaming may not necessarily be available immediately or instantly in time.

## Preventing Mobile Bill Shock

Consumers are strongly advised to consult their mobile operators on the latest initiatives, service terms and conditions, as well as charging schemes and methods and other pertinent details prior to committing themselves to mobile data service offerings. Furthermore consumers are encouraged to discuss with their respective operators roaming charges before they travel abroad so that they plan wisely how much they are going to use. Consumers are urged to be conscious of the capabilities of their communication gadgets and know how they operate. Consumers must consider turning off data roaming, disable location services, switch email to manual and use mobile websites when travelling abroad, unless they specifically desire to receive and send data.

Consumers are also advised to carefully read the terms and conditions of the contracts they enter into so that they fully understand the cost of usage of the various services. They must as well familiarize themselves with the new gadgets (notably smartphones) which have features that may if not disabled, continue to download data even when the user is not aware and this may result in the user contending they have been improperly billed.

Similarly BOCRA encourages operators to help consumers control the amount they spend on their mobile phones by alerting them through short messages as their pre-determined usage threshold is reached and to be transparent on charges for services.

BOCRA trusts that information availed to consumers will help them make more informed choices on services that best suit their needs.

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