

THEFT OF SERVICES¹
(Avoiding Service Charges By Tampering or Making
Connection With Equipment)
Penal Law § 165.15(4)(a)
(Committed on or after Nov. 1, 1987)

The (specify) count is Theft of Services.

Under our law, a person is guilty of Theft of Services when, with the intent to avoid payment by himself or herself [*or* another person] of the lawful charge for any telecommunication service including, without limitation,

Select appropriate alternative(s):

cable television service
gas service
steam service
sewer service
water service
electrical service
telegraph service
telephone service

which is provided for a charge or compensation, that person

Select appropriate alternative:

obtains or attempts to obtain such service for himself or herself (*or* another person)

avoids or attempts to avoid payment for such service by himself or herself (*or* another person)]

¹If cable television services are involved, a violation of Penal Law 165.15(4)(a) is a violation unless the stolen service has a value in excess of \$100 or the defendant has a prior conviction for theft of services under this subsection, in which case it is a Class A Misdemeanor. If services other than cable television are involved, the crime is a Class A Misdemeanor.

by means of tampering or making connection with the equipment of the supplier, whether by mechanical, electrical, acoustical, or other means.

[NOTE: If cable television service is involved and the defendant is charged with this crime as a Class A Misdemeanor because the value of the service exceeded \$100, add the following:

and the value of such cable television service exceeds one hundred dollars (\$100).]²

The following terms used in that definition have a special meaning:

INTENT means conscious objective or purpose.³ Thus, a person acts with intent to avoid payment by himself or herself [or another person] of a lawful charge for a service when that person's conscious objective or purpose is to avoid payment of a lawful charge for such service.

²If cable television service is involved, this crime is elevated from a violation to a Class A Misdemeanor only if either of two alternative aggravating elements is present--the one stated in the text, and:

"and [the defendant] has been previously convicted of theft of services under [Penal Law § 165.15(4)]."

If this latter element applies, it must be charged in a special information. The defendant must be arraigned upon the special information in accordance with the procedure set forth in CPL § 200.60(3). If, upon such arraignment, the defendant admits the element, the court **must not make any reference to it in the definition of the offense or in listing the elements of the offense.** But if the defendant denies the element or remains mute, the court must add the element to the definition of the crime and the list of elements. See, *People v. Cooper*, 78 NY2d 476 (1991).

³See Penal Law § 15.05(1).

[Here add, from "Additional Charges" at the end of this Article, any Penal Law § 165.15(4) presumptions which apply.]

[CABLE TELEVISION SERVICE means any and all services provided by or through the facilities of any cable television system, closed circuit coaxial cable communications system, or any microwave or similar transmission service used in connection with any cable television system or other similar closed circuit coaxial cable communications system.⁴]

OBTAIN includes, but is not limited to, the bringing about of a transfer, or purported transfer, of a service or of a legal interest therein, whether to the obtainer or another person.⁵

A person ATTEMPTS to obtain [*or* avoid payment for] a service by means of tampering or making connection with the equipment of the supplier, when he or she intends to do so and engages in conduct which tends to effect that objective.⁶

A person TAMPERS with equipment when he or she improperly alters or interferes with such equipment.⁷

[Add if applicable:

Under our law, a person who tampers with a telecommunications device or equipment without the consent of the supplier of the service is presumed to do so with the intent to avoid (*or* to enable another to avoid) payment for the service involved.⁸ This means that, if the People have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant tampered with a

⁴See Penal Law § 155.00(9).

⁵See Penal Law § 155.00(2).

⁶See Penal Law § 110.00.

⁷See Black's Law Dictionary (6th Ed. 1990).

¹See, Penal Law § 165.15(4).

telecommunications device or equipment, you may, but you are not required to, infer from that fact that the defendant did so with the intent to avoid (or to enable another to avoid) payment.]

[VALUE means the market value of the service at the time and place of the crime.⁹]

In order for you to find the defendant guilty of this crime, the People are required to prove, from all the evidence in the case, beyond a reasonable doubt, both [each] of the following two [three] elements:

1. That on or about (date), in the county of (county), the defendant, (defendant's name),

[Select appropriate alternative:

obtained or attempted to obtain for himself/herself (or another person)

or avoided or attempted to avoid payment by himself/herself (or another person) for]

any telecommunications service including, without limitation, cable television service [or gas service] [or steam service] [or sewer service] [or water service] [or electrical service] [or telegraph service] [or telephone service], which was provided for a charge or compensation, by means of tampering [or making connection] with the equipment of the supplier; and

2. That the defendant did so with the intent to avoid payment by himself/herself [or another person] of the lawful charge for such service.

⁸See Penal Law § 155.20(1), which also provides that, if market value "cannot be satisfactorily ascertained," value means "the cost of replacement of the property within a reasonable time after the crime."

[If cable television service is involved and the defendant is charged with this crime as a Class A Misdemeanor because the value of the service exceeded \$100, add:

and

3. That the value of such service exceeded one hundred dollars (\$100).]¹⁰

If you find the People have proven beyond a reasonable doubt each of those elements, you must find the defendant guilty of this crime.

If you find the People have not proven beyond a reasonable doubt any one or more of those elements, you must find the defendant not guilty of this crime.

⁹If cable television service is involved, the defendant is charged with this crime as a Class A Misdemeanor on the basis of a prior conviction, and the defendant admitted the prior conviction, then list *only* the first two elements for the jury.

If the prior conviction element is applicable and the defendant has denied that element or remained mute, add the following:

"and 3. That the defendant had been previously convicted of theft of services under Penal Law § 165.15(4)."