

## Robocalls & Robotexts: Stop the Madness!

### A Note from Our Chief Security Officer:

As you see in the headline, our goal with this issue is to help you and your family stop the madness of robocalls and texts. We rely increasingly on mobile devices, especially with so many of us working from home. Scammers and cyber criminals look for ways to relieve us of our money and personal information, especially in times of uncertainty.

Read on for real life information and solutions to the steady bombardment of unwanted calls and texts. There are tools and resources we all can use to block, and even eliminate, some of the distraction from our busy lives.

Solomon Adote



### Robocalls Impeding your Day?



Why, ... oh why are **robocalls** dominating my phone? The short answer: **They work and are inexpensive!**

According to Jeff Galak, Associate Professor of Marketing at Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business, eliminating humans dialing phones means marketers and scammers can reach millions of phones effectively and cheaply.

"And they work for two reasons," Galak explains. "First, they can separate the diligent consumers from the less diligent. If you pick up a robocall and talk to the automated system, the caller now knows that there is a human on the other end of the phone and can sell that information to others. The second reason is that they are a fast way to get information—and sometimes disinformation—out to many people quickly."

Roughly 58.5 billion robocalls were made in the U.S. in 2019 according to YouMail, a company that provides a service to block robocalls. They estimated that the average American received 178.3 robocalls during the year. Now that is a statistic we can all agree that we would prefer to be left out of!

#### The FCC has provided the following tips to assist with stopping unwanted robocalls:

- Don't answer calls from unknown numbers. If you answer such a call, hang up immediately.
- Be aware: Caller ID showing a "local" number does not necessarily mean it is a local caller.
- If you answer the phone and the caller - or a recording - asks you to hit a button to stop getting the calls, you should just hang up. Scammers often use this trick to identify potential targets.
- Do not respond to any questions, especially those that can be answered with "Yes."
- Never give out personal information such as account numbers, Social Security numbers, mother's maiden names, passwords or other identifying information.
- If you get an inquiry from someone who says they represent a company or a government agency, hang up and call the phone number on your account statement, in the phone book, or on the company's or government agency's website to verify the authenticity of the request.
- If you have a voice mail account with your phone service, be sure to set a password for it.
- Talk to your phone company about call blocking tools they may have and check into apps that you can download to your mobile device to block unwanted calls.

Source: Consumer Tips from the FCC

### Ping ... Robotext ... GGRRR!

As if robocalls and spoofed numbers weren't enough of an interruption: **robotexts** have also become far more prevalent in recent years. Regulations limiting these activities are stronger than before, texts continue to multiply as scammers attempt to take advantage of events like the pandemic and recent weather catastrophes.



Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules ban text messages sent to a mobile phone using an auto-dialer, unless you previously gave consent to receive the message or the message is sent for emergency purposes.

- For commercial texts, your consent must be in writing
- For non-commercial, informational texts (such as those sent by or on behalf of tax-exempt non-profit organizations, those for political purposes, and other non-commercial purposes, such as school closings), your consent may be oral
- The ban applies even if you have not placed your mobile number of the national Do Not Call list

Neighbor spoofing is a tactic used by robocallers. This spoofing displays a phone number similar to your own on your caller ID, to increase the likelihood that you will answer the call. To help combat neighbor spoofing, the FCC is urging the phone industry to adopt a robust caller ID authentication system. When is spoofing illegal? Under the Truth in Caller ID Act, FCC rules prohibit anyone from transmitting misleading or inaccurate caller ID information with the intent to defraud, cause harm or wrongly obtain anything of value. Anyone who is illegally spoofing can face penalties of up to \$10,000 for each violation.

Remember way back when prank calls were a point of frustration. Then \*69 came into play and phased those calls out. Now we have the latest frustrations, but check out these [resources](#) to assist with eliminating those pesky robocalls/texts. What's next? Only time will tell!

Questions, Comments, or Topic Suggestions? Email us at [eSecurity@delaware.gov](mailto:eSecurity@delaware.gov)



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