

FCC Consumer Advisory

Calls from "809," "649," "284" Area Codes - Beware

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has recently learned that an old long distance phone scam that leads consumers to incur high charges on their phone bills may now affect wireless consumers. In the past, consumers have been fooled into making expensive international calls by scam artists who leave messages on consumers' answering machines or their e-mail accounts. The messages urge consumers to call a number with an "809," "284," "876," or some other area code to collect a prize, find out about a sick relative, or engage in sex talk.

Wireless consumers are now receiving similar calls from phone numbers with three-digit area codes that appear to be domestic, but are actually associated with international pay-per-call phone numbers. While wireless companies are working to block suspicious numbers on their networks, some consumers may become victims of this scam.

The Scam Works Something Like This:

- Your wireless phone rings once or twice and then disconnects the call. When the number appears in your wireless phone log as a missed call, it appears to be a typical domestic telephone number starting with a "649" area code; *or* you get an e-mail or voicemail (on your residential wired telephone) telling you to call a phone number with an "809," "284," "876," or some other three-digit international area code.
- When you return the call, you assume you are making a domestic long distance call – as "649," "809," "284," "876," and other area codes involved in this scam, appear to be typical three-digit U.S. area codes.
- When you dial the three-digit area code plus the number, however, you are connected to a phone number outside the United States, often in Canada or the Caribbean, and are charged expensive international call rates, and may be charged for pay-per-call services as well. (In this case, "649" goes to the Turks and Caicos, "809" goes to the Dominican Republic, "284" goes to the British Virgin Islands, and "876" goes to Jamaica.)
- You don't find out about the higher international call rates until you receive your phone bill.

What You Can Do to Minimize the Risk of This Happening to You:

- Check any unfamiliar area codes before returning calls.

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- Be aware that there are many 3-digit area codes (mostly in the Caribbean) that connect callers to international telephone numbers.
- If you do not otherwise make international calls, ask your local or wireless phone company to block outgoing international calls on your line.

Filing a Complaint with the FCC

If you are billed for a call you made as a result of this scam, first try to resolve the matter with your telephone company. If you are unable to resolve it directly, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint. You can file your complaint using an FCC on-line complaint form found at esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm. You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing fccinfo@fcc.gov; calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

The best way to provide all the information the FCC needs to process your complaint is to complete fully the on-line complaint form. When you open the on-line complaint form, you will be asked a series of questions that will take you to the particular section of the form you need to complete. If you do not use the on-line complaint form, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

- your name, address, e-mail address, and phone number where you can be reached;
- the telephone and account numbers that are the subject of your complaint;
- the name and phone numbers of any companies involved with your complaint;
- the amount of any disputed charges, whether you paid them, whether you received a refund or adjustment to your bill, the amount of any adjustment or refund you have received, an explanation if the disputed charges are related to services in addition to residential or business telephone services; and
- the details of your complaint and any additional relevant information.

Filing a Complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

If you feel that you are a victim of an international phone scam, you can file a complaint with the FTC online at <https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov/>. You can also submit a complaint by calling the FTC toll-free at 1-877-382-4357 (voice) or 1-866-653-4261 (TTY), or writing to:

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Federal Trade Commission
CRC - 240
600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20580.

For More Information

For information about other telecommunications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb, or contact the FCC's Consumer Center using the information provided for filing a complaint.

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For this or any other consumer publication in an accessible format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio) please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/.

This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceedings or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

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