

Background

Caller Identification or “Caller ID” allows you to identify a caller before you answer your telephone. It is an optional telephone service, available from your local telephone service provider for an additional monthly fee. A caller’s number and/or name are displayed either on your phone (if your phone has this feature) or on an external display unit that you can buy separately. The number and/or name will appear on the display unit or on your phone after the first ring. This service also lets you identify yourself to the person you are calling.

Caller ID service, however, is susceptible to fraud. Using a practice known as “caller ID spoofing,” disreputable parties can deliberately falsify the telephone number relayed as the Caller ID number to disguise the identity and originator of the call. Congress is currently considering new laws that would make this practice a crime and permit law enforcement authorities to take action against spoofers.

FCC Caller ID Rules for Telemarketers

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules prohibit telemarketers from blocking Caller ID information and require them to pass accurate caller ID numbers. FCC rules specifically require that a telemarketer:

- transmit or display its telephone number, and, if possible, its name or the name and telephone number of the company for which it is selling products or services.
- display a telephone number that you can call during regular business hours to ask to no longer be called. This rule applies even to companies that already have an established business relationship with you.

For violations of these rules, the FCC can seek a monetary fine. If the violator is not an FCC licensee, the FCC must first issue a warning and the telemarketer may be fined only for violations committed after the warning.

Rules for Blocking and Unblocking Your Telephone Number

The FCC’s Caller ID rules protect the privacy of the person calling by requiring telephone companies to make available free, simple, and uniform per-line blocking and unblocking procedures. These rules give you the choice of delivering or blocking your telephone number for any interstate (between states) call you make. (The FCC does not regulate blocking and unblocking of intrastate calls.)

- **Per-call blocking** – To block your phone number and name from appearing on a recipient’s Caller ID unit on a single phone call, dial *67 before dialing the phone number. Your number will not be sent to the other party. You must redial *67 each time you place a new call.
- **Per-line blocking** – Some states allow customers to select per-line blocking. With this option, your telephone number will be blocked for every call you make on a specific line – unless you use the per-line unblocking option. If you use per-line blocking and want

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Rules for Blocking and Unblocking Your Telephone Number (cont'd.)

your number to be transmitted to the called party, dial ***82** before you dial the number you are calling. You must re-dial ***82** each time you place a call.

- **Blocking Your Name** – Some Caller ID services also transmit the name of the calling party. If you request that your phone number be concealed, FCC rules require that a telephone company also conceal your name.
- **800 number/toll-free calls** – When you dial a toll-free number, the party you are calling pays for the call. The called party is able to identify your telephone number using a telephone network technology called Automatic Number Identification (ANI). Requesting privacy for your number when you call 800, 888, 877, and 866 numbers from your local telephone company may not prevent its display to the called party. FCC rules, however, prevent parties that own toll-free numbers from reusing or selling the telephone numbers identified through ANI without the subscriber's consent.
- **Emergency Calls** – Telephone companies may transmit numbers of subscribers requesting privacy if the call is to a public agency's emergency telephone line or in conjunction with 911 or poison control services.

Tips for Consumers

Look before you dial:

- To block your telephone number for any call, dial ***67** before dialing the telephone number.
- To unblock your number for any call (if you have a blocked line), dial ***82** before dialing the telephone number.

Filing a Complaint

If you have caller ID and receive a call from a telemarketer without the required caller ID information, if you suspect that Caller ID information has been falsified, or you think the rules for protecting the privacy of your telephone number have been violated, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint. You can file your complaint using an 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, D.C. 20554.

What to Include in Your Complaint

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 names and phone numbers of any companies involved with your complaint;
- the type of service that you are complaining about;
- the telephone number or account number for any service you are complaining about;

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What to Include in Your Complaint (cont'd.)

- the date of any bill you are complaining about, the amount of the disputed charges, and the amount of any refund you have received;
- a brief description of the event or action you are complaining about; and
- the resolution you are seeking, such as a credit or refund or a clearer explanation of the charge(s).

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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