

FCC Consumer Advisory

Don't Fall for the 90# Telephone Scam

The old traditional (wired) phone scam involving the 90# buttons on your business telephone is still around.

How This Scam Occurs

You receive a call at your office from someone claiming to be a telephone company employee investigating technical problems with your line, or checking up on calls supposedly placed to other states or countries from your line. The caller asks you to aid the investigation by either dialing 90# or transferring him/her to an outside line before hanging up the telephone receiver. By doing this, you may be enabling the caller to place calls that are billed to your office telephone number.

What You Should Know

- Telephone company employees checking for technical and other types of telephone service or billing problems would not call and ask a subscriber to dial a specific series of numbers before hanging up the telephone receiver.
- Telephone company employees would not request subscribers to connect the caller to an outside line before hanging up the receiver.
- These types of calls are made to trick subscribers into taking actions that will enable the caller to place fraudulent calls.
- This scam only works if your telephone is served by a private branch exchange (PBX) or private automatic branch exchange (PABX).

What to Do

If your place of business utilizes either a PBX or a PABX, you or your company telecommunications manager should contact the manufacturer of the PBX or PABX and the telephone companies that provide you with local and long distance service to obtain information about the type of security systems available to protect your telephone system from toll fraud. You may also ask about any monitoring services that help detect unusual telephone system usage.

(More)



Avoid Becoming a Target

To avoid becoming a target of this scam, educate yourself and other employees about the 90# scam. Encourage employees to take the following steps if they think that a telephone call is fraudulent or is part of this scam:

- Ask the caller for his/her name and telephone number;
- Tell the caller you are going to call the telephone company immediately to determine whether or not there is a problem with the line;
- Immediately hang up the receiver; do not dial any numbers or transfer the caller to an outside line before hanging up;
- Find the telephone number for your telephone service provider and/or its security office and report the suspicious phone call. Be prepared to provide details of the call to the telephone company representative; and
- Contact your local law enforcement officials.

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

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Federal Communications Commission ■ Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau ■ 445 12th St., SW ■ Washington, DC 20554
1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) ■ TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) ■ Fax: 1-866-418-0232 ■ www.fcc.gov/cgb