

FCC Consumer Advisory

Mexico Collect Call Scam

The FCC has learned of a telephone scam that originates in Mexico and apparently targets people in Hispanic communities, or with Spanish surnames.

Consumers report that they have been deceived into accepting a collect call from a particular family member when, in fact, the call is from a stranger. The consumer is then fraudulently billed a large amount for a call that lasts a few minutes or less – or for a nonexistent call.

This scam seems to be prevalent in Spanish-speaking communities in California, Texas, Florida, New York and Illinois.

Here's How it Works

An operator calls the consumer's residential telephone number and tells the consumer he/she has a collect call from a family member who has an emergency or an important message. The operator has all the relevant information – the family's last name, husband's name, wife's name, etc. The operator provides the consumer with the "calling family member's" name. The consumer accepts the operator-assisted call, assuming there is a real emergency or message. Upon accepting the call, the consumer is then connected to a complete stranger who gives information that is not related to the consumer's family. Realizing the call is a fraud, the consumer immediately hangs up, but is still billed for the call.

In some cases, the consumer is not even allowed to respond "yes" or "no" in accepting the call; the operator automatically puts the call through without waiting for an affirmative response. Other times, the consumer actually declines the call and is still charged a very high rate for a collect call that was never accepted.

Here's How to Avoid This Scam

Consumers should use voice recognition as a tool for identifying the person placing the collect call. Specifically, consumers should ask the operator to have the person placing the collect call speak his name, instead of allowing the operator to say the name of the person placing the collect call. Also, consumers should carefully examine their monthly telephone bills for accuracy, and report errors to the company billing for the erroneous charges.

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Filing a Complaint with the FCC

Consumers who become victims of this scam 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, 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 telephone and account numbers that are the subject of your complaint;
- the names 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, and 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:

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

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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.

10/08/08*

