

# FCC Consumer Advisory

## Modem Redialing

Consumers have informed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that they have been billed for international calls that occurred as a result of using local (domestic) Internet service providers to access Web sites. The FCC is monitoring the situation. There are some precautions you can take to minimize your chances of becoming a victim.

### Here's How It Works

Some Web sites encourage computer users to download software in order to view certain material. Unknown to that user, the downloaded software disconnects his or her computer's modem and then reconnects it using an international long distance number. Also, some Web sites' pop-up advertisements may install spyware-type programs that initiate the same action on a computer modem, even if the user does not click to accept an offer. The result: the modem may actually be placing a call to places as far away as Chad, Madagascar, Vanuatu, or other countries, and the computer user may be billed for an international call.

**IMPORTANT:** Don't download programs from the Internet without reading the disclosures. Some Web sites may be advertised as "free and uncensored" or may allow information to be downloaded. However, a pop-up window with a disclaimer should appear. The disclaimer usually reveals information on possible charges or the rerouting of the Web site. It may say, "you will be disconnected from your local Internet access number and reconnected to an international location" (which may be Chad, Madagascar, Vanuatu, or some other country). It is important that consumers read the disclaimer to learn what charges will be assessed before they click the box. If they still choose to download, consumers should be prepared to receive a phone bill with high international toll charges. There may also be charges from a non-telecommunications company that provides a billing service to the Web site in question.

To minimize the risk of this happening: 1) individuals should ask their local phone company for an INTERNATIONAL BLOCK on their computer line; 2) individuals who acquire broadband Internet access should consider disabling their modems; 3) individuals should take advantage of firewalls, virus protection, and anti-spyware programs, and ensure that they have downloaded the latest updates of their operating systems and internet browsers.

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## Filing a Complaint with the FCC

If you encounter this situation, 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](https://support.fcc.gov/complaints.htm). You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing [fccinfo@fcc.gov](mailto: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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 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 file 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](http://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](mailto:FCC504@fcc.gov).*

*To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on [www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/).*

*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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