

# FCC Consumer Advisory

## Careless Dialing Could Cost You Money

Be careful when placing collect or other operator-assisted calls, or you or the party you're calling may wind up paying more than you expected.

The unexpected charges may come as a result of a scheme that takes advantage of individuals who misdial phone numbers. The scheme goes something like this: You place a collect call from a public phone or payphone, intending to use a service like 1-800-CALL-ATT or 1-800-COLLECT. But you misspell or hit an incorrect button when dialing. You accidentally dial something like 1-800-CALLLAT. You get connected to the party you wished to call, but the phone company that connects you is not the one you thought you were using. Instead, it is a company that secured 800 numbers similar to well-known ones (*i.e.*, a company secures the number "800-CALLLAT"). The company is likely hoping that you might accidentally misdial your intended number. If this happens, you are probably unaware you are using a different phone carrier than the one you intended to use because you don't know you misdialed. Often, the company won't identify itself to you or the person receiving the collect call before connecting the call.

Surprise! The charge for the misdialed call is two or more times higher than it would have been had you reached the carrier you intended to use.

### To Avoid the Scheme

#### CALLERS PLACING COLLECT CALLS:

- **Dial carefully.** Listen on the handset to make sure you hit each number only once. If you aren't sure you dialed correctly, hang up and start again.
- **Listen carefully.** Once you've made the call, listen for the provider identification. If you placed the call from a public (hotel, airport, etc.) phone or payphone, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has rules that require the provider to orally identify itself before your call is connected and billed. The rules also require the provider to give you directions on how to determine the price of your call. If you don't hear a provider identification, ask the operator (if you are able to reach a live operator) who the provider is and what the rates are. If the provider or rate is not what you wanted, hang up and dial again. If you do not hear a provider identification and you can't reach an operator, hang up and dial again.

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## RECEIVERS OF COLLECT CALLS:

- **Ask if uncertain.** When a collect call is connected, listen for an identification of the service provider before accepting the charges. If you don't hear the provider identified, say "no" to the collect call until you're able to find out who is connecting the call. If it's a provider that's not familiar to you and/or you're not comfortable with, ask for the per-minute rates. If you don't get an answer, say "no" to the call. If possible, ask the person who is calling to call again using the intended provider.
- **Review phone bills carefully.** Although this review may not prevent you from becoming a victim of this scheme, it may help you avoid it in the future. If you or your family frequently make collect or other operator-assisted calls from public phones or payphones, be aware of the dangers of misdialing.

## Filing a Complaint with the FCC

If you suspect you're a victim of this scheme, contact the phone company that charged you for the call in question. The company's number should be listed on your phone bill. If you can't resolve the matter directly, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint.

You can file your complaint using an online complaint form found at [www.fcc.gov/complaints](http://www.fcc.gov/complaints). You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center by 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 online complaint form. When you open the online 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 online complaint form, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

- your name, address, email 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 residence or business telephone services; and

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- the details of your complaint and any additional relevant information.

### **For More Information**

For information about other telecommunications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau website at [www.fcc.gov/consumer-governmental-affairs-bureau](http://www.fcc.gov/consumer-governmental-affairs-bureau), or contact the FCC's Consumer Center using the information provided for filing a complaint.

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

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