

FCC Consumer Advisory

Use of Toll-Free Numbers for Video and IP Relay Service

Background

As of November 13, 2009, all Video Relay Service (VRS) and Internet Protocol (IP) Relay service providers were required to ensure that all users are registered with a provider, have obtained a local ten-digit telephone number for their VRS or IP Relay service, and provided their location information. If VRS and IP Relay users have a toll-free number (*i.e.*, a number containing codes 800, 888, 877, 866 or 855) in addition to a local ten-digit number, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has clarified that a provider must link the toll-free number directly to the user's local ten-digit number in the database that controls all public telephone network toll-free numbers. The goal of the new ten-digit numbering plan is to ensure that VRS and IP Relay users, like voice telephone users, have a local ten-digit telephone number, and, therefore, to transition away from VRS and IP Relay users using toll-free or "proxy" numbers.

The provider with which the VRS or IP Relay user has registered becomes the user's "default" provider, and by default all calls will be routed through that provider. A VRS or IP Relay user may, however, change his or her default provider at any time (and keep the same number), and may also make or receive calls through any other provider ("dial around" calls). Ten-digit numbers may also be used to make point-to-point (*i.e.*, video-to-video) calls that do not require the use of a relay service.

How Will Calls Be Made?

Under the new numbering plan, a voice telephone user can call a VRS or IP Relay user simply by dialing that person's local ten-digit number (or toll-free number, if the VRS or IP Relay user has a toll-free number). There are two situations, however, in which a caller will need to use the local ten-digit number instead of a toll-free number: (1) on "dial-around" calls placed by a voice telephone user; and (2) on point-to-point calls. These situations are described below.

Dial-around calls to a VRS or IP Relay user. A voice telephone user wishing to call a VRS or IP Relay user *through a relay provider other than the user's default provider* must provide the alternative provider with the VRS or IP Relay user's local ten-digit local number, not the VRS or IP relay user's toll-free number.

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Point to point calls. If a VRS user wishes to place a direct point-to-point (video-to-video) call to another VRS user so that the two parties can communicate directly via sign language (*i.e.*, without the use of relay service), the calling party may have to dial the called party's local ten-digit number, and not the toll-free number.

What Can VRS and IP Relay Users With Toll Free Numbers Do?

VRS and IP Relay users should include their local ten-digit number as part of their contact information. If VRS users (or businesses) have used a toll-free number for point-to-point calls, they should now tell contacts to call them via their local ten-digit telephone number, and not through their toll-free number. Similarly, if a VRS user is placing a point-to-point call, the user should call the other party's local ten-digit telephone number, and not a toll-free number.

For More Information

For more information about the FCC's ten-digit numbering requirements, see the FCC consumer guides at www.fcc.gov/guides/ten-digit-numbering-and-911-calls-internet-based-trs and www.fcc.gov/guides/ten-digit-numbering-and-emergency-call-handling-procedures-internet-based-trs. For more information about TRS, VRS or IP Relay, or to learn more about FCC programs to promote access to telecommunications services for people with disabilities, visit the FCC's Disability Rights Office website at www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro. For information about other communications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau website at www.fcc.gov/consumer-governmental-affairs-bureau, or contact 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, DC 20554.

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