



## **Cell Phones and The Do Not Call Registry: Despite viral email, there is no new cell phone database**

The truth about cell phones and the Do Not Call Registry is: The government is not releasing cell phone numbers to telemarketers. Consumers may continue to place their cell phone numbers on the National Do Not Call Registry to notify marketers that they don't want to get unsolicited telemarketing calls. The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) is hopeful that while hoax emails are a danger, perhaps this will shock more consumers to register their cell phone numbers with the FTC's National Do Not Call Registry. There is only one Do Not Call Registry, operated by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). There is no separate registry for cell phones. See <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0133-cell-phones-and-do-not-call-registry>. There is no deadline for registering a cell phone number on the Do Not Call Registry

The Do Not Call Registry accepts registrations from both cell phones and land lines. To register by telephone, call 1-888-382-1222 (TTY: 1-866-290-4236). You must call from the phone number that you want to register. To register online ([www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov)), you will have to respond to a confirmation email.

If you have registered a mobile or other telephone number already, you don't need to re-register. Once registered, a telephone number stays on the Do Not Call Registry until the registration is canceled or service for the number is discontinued.

### **Reasons Spam Calls Are Notorious:**

- Consumers prefer to give out their landline rather than mobile number. Part of the reason is that, in the US, the called party pays for a mobile phone call.
- Customers are less receptive to telemarketing calls to their mobile phones. When you call a landline you know that the person you are calling is at home, but if you call a mobile phone the person you are calling may be at work, driving, on a train, etc. This makes them less open to a pitch to, say, change their energy supplier.
- Whereas you have to be an adult to have a landline, many children have mobile phones.
- Unlike computer email accounts, there is no spam filter on cell phone calls, though it is probably that over time more control over incoming phone calls will grow with consumer demands.

## **‘Mobile Only’ Phone Use Is Increasing**

The number of houses that are ‘mobile only’ is increasing, a trend that is particularly striking for younger adults: 30% of 15-24s live in a mobile only household. If your only phone number is a mobile number you have to give this out on applications forms, so these numbers are entering the general universe of marketing databases.

## **Recorded Message Calls (Or Robocalls)**

A related nuisance call issue is recorded message calls (or robocalls) both in terms of the volume of nuisance calls they can generate, and their potential to be used to perpetrate scams and fraud.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations prohibit telemarketers from using automated dialers to call cell phone numbers without prior consent. Automated dialers are standard in the industry, so most telemarketers are barred from calling consumers' cell phones without their consent.

That isn't to say robocalls do not wind up being received by cell phones. In May 2009, the Federal Trade Commission issued a restraining order on two telemarketing companies for making random, pre-recorded phone calls to deceive consumers into thinking that their vehicle's warranty was about to expire. These companies generated almost a billion automated message calls, making sales of over \$10m (suggesting that calls were costing at most one cent each to make). This compares to about 30 cents per call attempt by a live agent.

## **Contact The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority With Complaints.**

PURA is statutorily mandated and funded to handle consumer complaints relating to public utility services. PURA advises that, if you experience a problem with a utility company, to contact the utility company first and give it an opportunity to resolve your problem. If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction please contact PURA for help.

1-800 382-4586 (toll free within Connecticut)

1-860 827-2622 (outside Connecticut)

TDD 860-827-2837

<http://www.dpuc.state.ct.us/PURACAIU.NSF/RevWebIntake?OpenForm>