



District Attorney's Office • 18th Judicial District

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Consumer Advisory

Unlawful Robocalls are Going Away

Good news! As of this year, phone companies now have the authority to legally stop fraudulent robocalls from being forwarded on to customers. This follows the creation of SHAKEN/STIR – multi-verification technology recently developed by the phone industry that can now accurately distinguish misleading robocall phone numbers from legitimate numbers associated with school closure notifications, medical appointment reminders, etc. This level of verification was necessary to assure the industry that vitally important calls which might otherwise be mistaken as scams would still go through to customers.

To further aid in the reduction of illegal calls, the federal TRACED Act was signed into law late last year to expand the detection of such perpetrators operating within the U.S. and from around the globe. Since the initiation of *auto dialers*, *i.e.*, devices that send out thousands of calls simultaneously, illegal robocalls have been difficult to control, especially those originating overseas, and which comprise the bulk of scam calls coming in to the U.S. Penalties upwards of \$10,000 can now be imposed on those who are caught. Another big take-away as a result of these efforts will likely be a reduction in *spoofing*, *i.e.*, fake numbers that show up on caller ID's for the purpose of tricking consumers into picking up their phones.

Other important points:

- SHAKEN/STIR technology only interacts with digital communication devices, e.g., cell and internet-connected phones (VOIP). Unfortunately, older analog landline phones, considered outdated by today's standards, cannot interface with wireless or digital phone systems. However, land-line users who also have cell phones should explore cell phone apps that can connect with and block unwanted calls left on their landlines at a distance. For more information, go to: www.Mymail.com, or contact your phone company.
- By law, phone companies cannot charge a fee to customers for this call-blocking service.
- Consumers are still encouraged to add their cell and landline numbers to the Federal and Colorado Do Not Call registries. Unlike typical scam calls that are deliberately placed to fool consumers into forking over money, legitimate businesses are still allowed to solicit consumers over the phone if the business has had dealings with that consumer within the past 18 months, and/or the consumer has given his/her expressed permission allowing such calls. Pollsters, political organizations and non-profit agencies are also allowed to call. Legitimate agencies who violate this law by not checking consumers' numbers against the Do Not Call registry should be reported to the Federal Trade Commission at 1-888-382-1222; (TTY): 1-866-290-4236. Such agencies can face significant fines if they violate consumers by calling to solicit them. A word of caution: Don't expect a major reduction in robocalls overnight. It will take time.