

Caller ID Spoofing

Spoofing is when a caller deliberately falsifies the information transmitted to your caller ID display to disguise their identity. Scammers often use neighbor spoofing so it appears that an incoming call is coming from a local number, or spoof a number from a company or a government agency that you may already know and trust. If you answer, they use scam scripts to try to steal your money or valuable personal information, which can be used in fraudulent activity.

Watch the video and click through the tabs to learn more about spoofing and how to avoid being scammed.

If you think you've been the victim of a spoofing scam, you can [file a complaint with the FCC](#).

How to Avoid Spoofing

You may not be able to tell right away if an incoming call is spoofed. Be extremely careful about responding to any request for personal identifying information.

- Don't answer calls from unknown numbers. If you answer such a call, hang up immediately.
- If you answer the phone and the caller - or a recording - asks you to hit a button to stop getting the calls, you should just hang up. Scammers often use this trick to identify potential targets.
- Do not respond to any questions, especially those that can be answered with "Yes" or "No."
- Never give out personal information such as account numbers, Social Security numbers, mother's maiden names, passwords or other identifying information in response to unexpected calls or if you are at all suspicious.
- If you get an inquiry from someone who says they represent a company or a government agency, hang up and call the phone number on your account statement, in the phone book, or on the company's or government agency's website to verify the authenticity of the request. You will usually get a written statement in the mail before you get a phone call from a legitimate source, particularly if the caller is asking for a payment.
- Use caution if you are being pressured for information immediately.
- If you have a voice mail account with your phone service, be sure to set a password for it. Some voicemail services are preset to allow access if you call in from your own phone number. A hacker could spoof your home phone number and gain access to your voice mail if you do not set a password.
- Talk to your phone company about call blocking tools and check into apps that you can download to your mobile device. The FCC allows phone companies to

block robocalls by default based on reasonable analytics. More information about robocall blocking is available at [fcc.gov/robocalls](https://www.fcc.gov/robocalls).

Remember to check your voicemail periodically to make sure you aren't missing important calls and to clear out any spam calls that might fill your voicemail box to capacity.

Q&As

What can you do if your number is being spoofed?

If you get calls from people saying your number is showing up on their caller ID, it's likely that your number has been spoofed. We suggest first that you do not answer any calls from unknown numbers, but if you do, explain that your telephone number is being spoofed and that you did not actually make any calls. You can also place a message on your voicemail letting callers know that your number is being spoofed. Usually, scammers switch numbers frequently. It is likely that within hours they will no longer be using your number.

What is neighbor spoofing?

Robocallers use neighbor spoofing, which displays a phone number similar to your own on your caller ID, to increase the likelihood that you will answer the call. To help combat neighbor spoofing, the FCC is requiring the phone industry to adopt a robust [caller ID authentication](#) system.

When is spoofing illegal?

Under the Truth in Caller ID Act, FCC rules prohibit anyone from transmitting misleading or inaccurate caller ID information with the intent to defraud, cause harm or wrongly obtain anything of value. Anyone who is illegally spoofing can face penalties of up to \$10,000 for each violation. However, spoofing is not always illegal. There are legitimate, legal uses for spoofing, like when a doctor calls a patient from her personal mobile phone and displays the office number rather than the personal phone number or a business displays its toll-free call-back number.

What is blocking or labeling?

If a telephone number is blocked or labeled as a "potential scam" or "spam" on your caller ID, it is possible the number has been spoofed. Several phone companies and app developers offer call-blocking and labeling services that detect whether a call is likely to be fraudulent based on call patterns, consumer complaints or other means. The FCC allows phone companies to block robocalls by default based on reasonable analytics. Carriers are also able to offer white list services to consumers. These

services would block calls from numbers not on your contact list, or another list you supply. The FCC has encouraged providers who block calls to establish a means for a caller whose number is blocked to contact the provider and remedy the problem. Providers are also encouraged to give consumers information on specific calls being blocked, along with a way for consumers to let them know if a number has been blocked incorrectly.

You can legally block the transmission of your phone number when you make calls, so your number will appear as "unknown." Doing so is not spoofing.

What are the caller ID rules for telemarketers?

FCC rules specifically require that a telemarketer:

- Transmit or display its telephone number or the telephone number on whose behalf the call is being made, and, if possible, its name or the name of the company for which it is selling products or services.
- Display a telephone number you can call during regular business hours to ask to no longer be called. This rule applies even to companies that already have an established business relationship with you.

Filing a complaint

You have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

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