

# FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer and Business Education

## Fraud on the Line: Avoiding “Do Not Call” Scams

Have you received a call from a company inviting you to preregister for the national “Do Not Call” list? What about a call asking to confirm your registration on a “Do Not Call” registry? If so, you may be the target of a scam, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the federal agency that is creating the national “Do Not Call” registry.

The FTC does not allow private companies or other third parties to “pre-register” consumers for the registry. Web sites or phone solicitors that claim they can or will register a consumer’s name or phone number on a national list — especially those who charge a fee — are a scam. Registration on the new national “Do Not Call” registry will be free. The FTC says that once a consumer signs up with a “Do Not Call” registry, there is no need to confirm personal information. And the government will not call anyone to put them on a “Do Not Call” registry.

According to the FTC, consumers will be able to register directly with the FTC, or through some state governments, but never through private companies. The agency is gearing up to accept registrations beginning in July 2003 from consumers who want to register online and who have an email account. For consumers who want to register by phone, a toll-free telephone number will be available. Phone registration dates will be scheduled by state during July and August. The FTC says summertime registrants should notice a downturn in telemarketing calls starting in October.

The FTC warns consumers to be wary of scams related to the registry. Many consumers who want to get fewer telemarketing calls already have signed up with a state “Do Not Call” registry, the Direct Marketing Association’s Telemarketing Preference Service or individual company “Do Not Call” lists. But consumer protection officials say that rip-off artists have begun to take advantage of the popularity of these services to trick consumers into giving up personal information, such as their Social Security number, bank account number, credit card number or telephone calling card number.

Here’s how the scam works: someone calls claiming to represent a “Do Not Call” registry or the FTC. The phony registry “official” asks for your personal information, supposedly to verify that you want to be on the “Do Not Call” list. The caller is a con artist who could use your personal information to run up debts in your name or otherwise steal your identity. Some con artists are pushing a similar scam through spam email.

The FTC’s Bureau of Consumer Protection says consumers can avoid these scams.

Here’s how:

- Keep information about your bank accounts and credit cards to yourself — including the numbers — unless you know who you’re dealing with.
- Never share your Social Security number with a person you don’t know.
- Don’t share your personal information if someone calls you claiming to represent a “Do Not Call” registry, an organization to stop fraud or even the FTC itself. If you get such a call, either hang up immediately or write down the caller’s organization and phone number and report it to the FTC at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or 1-877-FTC-HELP, or to your state attorney general.

For more information on how to reduce unwanted telemarketing calls, visit [www.ftc.gov/donotcall](http://www.ftc.gov/donotcall). If you believe that your personal information may have been compromised, visit [www.consumer.gov/idtheft](http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft).

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.



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