

Mexico Collect Call Scam

The FCC has learned of a telephone scam that originates in Mexico and apparently targets people in Hispanic communities, or with Spanish surnames. Consumers report that they have been deceived into accepting a collect call from a particular family member when, in fact, the call is from a stranger. The consumer is then fraudulently billed a large amount for a call that lasts a few minutes or less – or for a non-existent call. This scam seems to be prevalent in Spanish-speaking communities in California, Texas, Florida, New York and Illinois.

How It Works

An operator calls the consumer's residential telephone number and tells the consumer he/she has a collect call from a family member who has an emergency or an important message. The operator has all the relevant information – the family's last name, husband's name, wife's name, etc. The operator provides the consumer with the "calling family member's" name. The consumer accepts the operator-assisted call, assuming there is a real emergency or message. Upon accepting the call, the consumer is then connected to a complete stranger who gives information that is not related to the consumer's family. Realizing the call is a fraud, the consumer immediately hangs up, but is still billed for the call. In some cases, the consumer is not allowed to respond "yes" or "no" in accepting the call; the operator automatically puts the call through without waiting for an affirmative response. Other times, the consumer actually declines the call and is still charged a very high rate for a collect call that was never accepted.

How to Avoid This Scam

Consumers should use voice recognition as a tool for identifying the person placing the collect call. Specifically, consumers should ask the operator to have the person placing the collect call speak his name, instead of allowing the operator to say the name of the person placing the collect call. Also, consumers should carefully examine their monthly telephone bills for accuracy, and report errors to the company billing for the erroneous charges.

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
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Filing a Complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

If you feel that you are a victim of an international phone scam, you can file a complaint with the FTC online at <https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov>. You can also submit a complaint by calling the FTC toll-free at 1-877-382-4357 (voice) or 1-866-653-4261 (TTY), or writing to:

Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20580

Accessible formats

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