



Consumer Guide

International Modem Dialing Scams

If you use a dial-up modem to access the Internet and see a large international call on your phone bill that you don't remember making, you may have been duped into allowing access to your modem as part of an international dialing scam.

Here's how it works: Some websites encourage computer users to download software in order to view certain material. Though it may not be obvious, the software you download may disconnect your computer modem, then reconnect it using an international long distance number. The result: your modem may actually be placing calls to distant countries such as Chad, Madagascar or Vanuatu, with the charges showing up on your bill.

Use caution when you download

There are precautions you can take to minimize your chances of becoming a victim. Don't download programs from the internet without reading the disclosures. Some websites, advertised as "free and uncensored," may include disclaimers that often appear in a pop-up window revealing information on possible charges or rerouting of the website. It is important that you read the disclaimer to learn what charges will be assessed before you click a box agreeing to terms and conditions.

If a disclaimer says something like, "you will be disconnected from your local Internet access number and reconnected to an international location," and you agree to download anyway, you may receive a phone bill with high international toll charges. You also may be billed from a non-telecommunications company that provides a billing service to the website.

Some pop-up ads may install spyware-type programs that disconnect and reroute your modem, even if you do not give your permission.

Ways to minimize your risk

- Ask your service provider for an international block on your computer line.
- If you have broadband internet access, consider disabling your modem.
- Take advantage of firewalls, virus protection and anti-spyware software, and ensure you have downloaded the latest updates for your operating system and browsers you use.

Filing a complaint with the FCC

You have multiple options for filing a complaint:

- 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

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>.

Accessible formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

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