



FORT CAMPBELL CONSUMER AFFAIRS ALERT BULLETIN

101st Airborne Division (AASLT) FT. Campbell, KY 42223

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TELEPHONE SCAMS

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Be cautious when calling an unfamiliar telephone number — it could be a costly international telephone call. Consumers nationwide are being lured into calling international telephone numbers through advertisements and other promotions for interesting or important information. Ads may promise information and entertainment services ranging from psychic readings to chat lines to employment opportunities.

Know Where You're Calling

It's not always easy to tell if you're calling an international telephone number. In most cases, you have to dial "011" to begin your call to a foreign country. But there are locations outside the United States and Canada, many of them in the Caribbean, where you simply dial the area code and number to reach your party. And there are scam artists who have taken advantage of this confusion by promoting calls to "**809**" numbers in the Dominican Republic. While these telephone numbers may look like *domestic* long distance calls, *international* telephone rates apply.

Beware of Scams

Some international pay-per-call numbers are promoted in uniquely deceptive ways. You may receive "urgent" messages left on answering machines, pagers, or computer e-mail, trying to get you to call the international number. The messages tell you to call a long distance number for more information. In many cases, the return-call number is an international pay-per-call line, with a three digit exchange that looks like an American or Canadian area code. The message may falsely claim that a family member has been injured, that you've won a prize, or that there's a problem with your credit. If you return the call, you may be unwittingly putting money into the pockets of scam artists.

How to Protect Yourself

If you see an ad for an information or entertainment service, or receive an urgent message to return a call, follow these precautions:

- Be skeptical about area codes you don't recognize, especially: **809** (Dominican Republic); **758** (St. Lucia); or **664** (Montserrat). There are dozens of other area codes (most in the Caribbean), which connect callers to an international telephone call. Check your telephone directory or call the operator to determine if the area code is for a domestic or international location before calling.
- Be wary of ads for information or entertainment services, which make such claims as "not a 900 number," "no premiums apply," or "LD rates apply." The advertisers of these services would like consumers to believe that these pay-per-call services are not as costly as 900 number services when, in fact, they may be even more expensive.
- Promptly check your phone bill for long distance charges you don't recognize. If your bill contains an unauthorized call, contact your local telephone company as well as your long distance carrier. The telephone company may provide a credit or refund, but they are not required to do so. However, your notification will help the telephone companies identify telephone numbers which are the source of abuses.

For More Information

The organizations listed here can provide additional information and help you with complaints.

- Your state Attorney General. Most of these offices have divisions that deal primarily with consumer protection issues.
- The Federal Communications Commission's National Call Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322). The Center answers consumer inquiries relating to communications law and policy, matters pending before the FCC, and any possible violations of FCC law or policy.

POC for this Alert Bulletin is MSG Brandenburg or the undersigned @ 798-5528

BETTY GEREN
CONSUMER AFFAIRS DIRECTOR