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Tips for Older Consumers to Stop Illegal Robocalls



A Consumer Guide to Stopping Unwanted Robocalls

Source: Jeremiah Battle, **National Consumer Law Center**

Robocalls, the persistent automated telephone calls to cell phones and landlines, are a favorite tool of telemarketers, debt collectors, and

scammers. Older adults anticipating important calls from medical providers and others may be reluctant to answer the phone due to excessive or unwanted robo telephone calls.

There is no completely effective method to stop unwanted robocalls. The real solutions require that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) use the laws to regulate robocallers and require phone companies to authenticate all calls. Yet, the following tips can help consumers take some control:

File Complaints with the FCC

- Complaint data is the best tool federal agencies have to gauge the extent of the robocall epidemic. While filing a complaint may not prompt an immediate response, the data may prompt the FCC to take action.
- The Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) is the only legal defense to robocalls and texts made without your consent. [**File a complaint here.**](#)

Add Your Number to the Do-Not-Call List

- While the Do-Not-Call list does not stop all robocalls, it is a valuable resource for removing your number from the call lists of companies that do not want to violate the law.
- Sources of robocalls that you do business with, such as banks or loan servicers, and sources of scam calls that ignore the law, will still get through. [**Add your number here.**](#)

Revoke Consent for Company Calls

If you are receiving robocalls from a company you do business with (bank, lender, etc.), they likely have your consent (hidden in the fine print). You can revoke this consent at any time.



ACTION: Tell the caller you “revoke consent.” If the calls continue, contact customer service and tell them you want your number to be added to their “do not call” list. This will reduce the volume of legal robocalls you receive.

CRITICAL WARNING: DO NOT ENGAGE WITH THE CALLER

- Most autodialed robocalls include a prompt to press a key or give a voice command. ****DON'T!****
- Pressing a key, even to remove your number, tells the caller that your number is ****active****, leading to future calls.
- Voice commands can be recorded and used by scammers to fraudulently represent consent to purchase products or services.

Block Unknown Numbers (Mobile)

- Taking this action on a mobile device will help avoid robocalls. However, important calls can still come from unknown numbers, and most landline phones lack this feature.
- Consider this a last resort, as listening to voicemails left by robocallers can also be annoying (and costly, depending on your phone service).

Install Call-Blocking Apps

Various apps provide a free or low-cost service to mobile smart phone users that filter out identified scam robocalls. Examples include [YouMail](#) and [NoMoRobo](#). However, these apps typically do not help landline users.

TCPA Restrictions on Healthcare Facilities

The TCPA **prohibits** robocalls to a patient or guest room at a nursing home, hospital, or similar health facility.

Debt Collector Calls

- Collectors can call about debts owed or guaranteed by the federal government **without** your consent.
- Exceptions may exist in some states where robocalls for federal debt require consent, similar to all other robocalls to cell phones.

Sue the Caller

- The TCPA allows consumers to file a lawsuit to stop robocalls.
- If successful, the consumer can receive money, either actual damages or ****\$500 per violation****, whichever is greater. Damages can be ****tripled**** for knowing or willful violations.

This Tip Sheet accompanies NCLER's [webcast](#) on Protecting Older Adults Against Abusive Telemarketing Scams.

Find more information at the National Consumer Law Center's [Robocalls and Telemarketing](#) page.

Need Legal Assistance?

You may apply to [Kansas Legal Services](#) here or call **316-267-3975.**

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