

## **MORE SPOOFING NEWS**

Spoofing is the practice deliberately falsifying a telephone number and/or name relayed to the Caller ID feature of a phone. This type of call right now is the number one phone scam I receive. Many people report receiving calls appearing on Caller ID as from local numbers. When they answer, a telemarketer starts right in on a sales pitch for lower credit card interest rates, or medical alert devices. Some people report these spoofed calls appear on their Caller ID as coming from their own number! I wrote about this in my last column and told readers there seemed little we can do to prevent this kind of chicanery.

Well, I was wrong on that point. An alert reader informed me consumers can make complaints on spoofed phone calls to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). In 2009, the US Congress passed the Truth in Caller ID Act, which prohibits this practice. In 2010, the FCC adopted rules implementing this law, which calls for penalties of up to \$10,000 for each violation of the law. You can report these calls at 888-225-5322 or file a complaint online at [www.fcc.gov/complaints](http://www.fcc.gov/complaints). I filed a complaint online on behalf of a Clinton resident. The process is fairly easy to complete. I encourage anyone experiencing these calls to make such a complaint, or contact me.

## **ROBOCALLS NEWS**

In keeping with the theme so far of this column on phone calls, I learned of further efforts by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to thwart robo-calls. Robo-calls are the annoying (and illegal) recorded calls we receive offering lower interest rates, medical alert devices, home improvements, and so on.

The FTC plans on holding a contest at a high tech convention, DEF CON 22, in Las Vegas Aug. 7-10 to inspire innovative tech solutions to illegal robocalls. Advances in technology make it too cheap and easy for criminals to send out thousands of illegal robocalls every minute — and to spoof caller ID information, hiding their true location and identity. Because technology is at the heart of the problem, the FTC is tapping DEF CON 22, one of the world's biggest hacking conferences, for high-caliber technical support. More details about the contest are coming soon at [ftc.gov](http://ftc.gov). If you think you are good at this kind of technical problem-solving, plan on attending!

## **NEW SCAM**

Debra Markham of Clinton informed me of a new variation of email computer hacking. Markham started receiving instant messages from a friend who asked her if she received her \$150,000 award from Facebook. Markham, a Facebook user, never heard of this. The "friend" kept sending messages saying UPS just delivered \$150,000 in winnings to her, and she saw Markham's name in the "winner's list", also. The "friend" insisted Markham immediately contact someone by text message or through a Facebook page, to claim her prize. Markham rightly smelled a rat, and resisted acting on these persistent messages.

A few hours later, Markham learned someone hacked into her friend's email account, and hijacked it, making it appear as if these messages came from a trusted source. Markham told me, several other friends in her church group received the same kind of messages from "friends".

Facebook is not giving out \$150,000 prizes. I don't know exactly what kind of trouble you'd get into if you believed this pitch. Most likely, the scammer wants you to send money to claim the prize, or they want some personal information to "verify" the claim. They may even want passwords to your Facebook account, so in turn you can get hacked, and continue the cycle.

### **CONTINUING SCAMS**

In the last two weeks, four people complained about threatening calls they received concerning supposed bad debts. The callers threatened to arrest the person the next day, for example, writing a check on a closed account eight years ago. This is a scam. The callers want to rattle their prey, and convince them to pay up or face handcuffs. This is not the way debt collections legally work. No one goes to jail for bad debts. If you get one of these calls, or know someone who did, don't send any money. Call the police, sheriff's office, or the clerk of court and tell them what you heard. Or call me.

You can reach me at Seniors vs. Crime, 563-242-9211 ext. 4433, or by email at [randymeier@gmail.com](mailto:randymeier@gmail.com). Contact me with your reports of scams, frauds, other misrepresentations. Most of what I learn, I learn from readers.

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