

Reducing Annoying Telemarketing and Robocalls

Telemarketing calls are almost always unwanted, but there are things you can do to reduce their frequency, and your risk of being scammed.

Sign up with the Federal Trade Commission's Do Not Call Registry (DNCR):

- Go to: www.ftc.gov or call: 888-382-1222.
- Registering won't stop all unwanted calls, but reputable businesses honor the DNCR. Don't do business with a company that violates the DNCR.
- Charities, political campaigns and companies with whom you've done business are not subject to the DNCR law, but when asked, many will take you off their call lists.
- Once enrolled, report violations to the FTC. The FTC looks at complaints in deciding which DNCR violators to pursue.

Be cautious about sharing your phone number:

- Don't sign up for raffles or contests. Your phone number will be used for solicitations and may be sold to other telemarketers.
- Only enter your phone number on online forms used by entities you trust.
- Don't have your phone number printed on your checks.
- Request an unlisted phone number.

Hang up on suspicious callers:

- Engaging in conversation encourages con artists to call back. Screen your calls using voicemail or your answering machine if you find it hard to hang up on unwanted calls.
- Don't give your credit card number, bank account information or other personal information to anyone you do not know.
- Never agree to wire money or pay with a prepaid debit card or gift card.

Don't respond to robocalls – those annoying calls that deliver a recorded message. Robocalls are illegal unless you've authorized them (e.g. you agree to get calls that tell you a prescription is ready) or they are from charities or political campaigns.

- Screen out robocalls using your voicemail or answering machine.
- If you answer a robocall, hang up immediately. Don't press buttons or speak – even if the recording offers to remove your number from their calling list.
- Engaging with a robocall lets the program know it's reached a live phone number and will send more and more calls your way.
- Look into robocall blocking technology. The phone technology you use (e.g. VOIP, copper, i-phone, android) will dictate which blocking application will work and whether there's a fee. Many apps are free. Visit: www.ctia.org/consumer-tips/robocalls.
- Report unauthorized robocalls to the FTC at www.ftc.gov or 888-382-1222.

For more information, to file a complaint or to obtain this factsheet in an alternate format, visit www.howardcountymd.gov/consumer or contact us at 410-313-6420 or consumer@howardcountymd.gov.