

Protecting Your Assets

Know Your Telemarketing Rights

(NAPSA)—How do you know if a telemarketing call is a scam? That friendly voice on the phone may belong to an honest salesperson who is just trying to make a living or a crook who wants to trick you out of your money. Three-quarters of the adults recently surveyed by Consumer Federation of America (CFA) said that they think it is hard for most consumers to tell the difference. And while nine in ten are concerned that telemarketing calls from companies they haven't done business with before might be fraudulent, many do not know their basic telemarketing rights.

Knowing your telemarketing rights can help you spot fraud, because legitimate companies usually follow the rules; scammers don't. Is an unfamiliar company calling you even though your phone number is on the National Do Not Call Registry? Is it a recorded sales pitch when you never gave the company written permission to make that type of "robo-call" to you? Is the company's number blocked on your caller ID? CFA's new guide to Understanding Your Telemarketing Rights and Avoiding Fraud explains what telemarketers should and shouldn't do and how you can report violations. If the telemarketer is violating your rights, STOP! HANG UP! It may be a scam.

Other danger signs of telemarketing fraud include:

- Pressure to act immediately or you'll lose this great opportunity
- Promises that you can make easy money working from home
- Offers to help you get a loan, fix your credit record, settle your debts, save your home from foreclosure or recover money you've already lost to a scam, if you pay a fee in advance
- Guarantees that you can make big returns on investments with little or no risk
- Requests that you pay a fee to enter a sweepstakes or lottery or send money for taxes, bonding, or legal expenses to claim your winnings. It's also a danger sign if a prize is being offered as part of a sales pitch and the telemarketer doesn't tell you that no purchase is necessary.



You can protect yourself from the scams of crooked telemarketers—and tell which ones are legitimate salespeople.

Another clue is how you're asked to pay. Fraudsters usually want to get paid fast and in cash—they don't want to wait for checks to clear or for payments to go through the credit card system, so they look for other ways to get the money. If a telemarketer has money transfer as the only method of payment it accepts, beware! Those services should only be used to send money to companies you know and trust and to individuals you have met in person. You should always have the choice of whether to use money transfers or other ways to pay.

Scammers may even suggest that you put cash between the pages of a magazine and send it to them. Legitimate telemarketers would never ask you to do that. They are also exploiting new payment methods, telling people to send them the money on a prepaid card or to put it on a MoneyPak, a product that can be used to transfer funds to prepaid cards or make payments to authorized merchants, and give them the serial number. Their aim is to cash in and disappear before you realize that you've been robbed.

Crooks are also taking advantage of prepaid cell phones, Internet phone service, caller ID "spoofing" and other technologies to mask who and where they are. Often, they're in foreign countries, making it difficult for U.S. law enforcement to pursue them. Since money sent to scammers is often gone for good, learn how to protect yourself from telemarketing fraud and other scams at www.consumerfed.org/fraud.