



## Facts about the 809 Phone Scam

The 809 phone scam has been around for a while and although it does not happen as frequently as it used to, you should be aware of it.

On your phone answering system, pager or e-mail, someone will leave an alarming or enticing message, like a family member is ill or the message could be pornographic. The number given to call is a pay-per-call number in the Caribbean. Unlike pay-per-call numbers (976 and 900) in the United States, the number you call is not easily recognized as a pay-per-call number and there is no advance warning about the charges to call the number.

When you call, you are kept on the phone as long as possible to run up your bill. Even if you hang up immediately, you may be charged high international calling rates and the pay-per-call service fee.

Protect yourself by knowing where you are calling. There are other area codes in the Caribbean that are pay-per-call numbers and other numbers in the 809 area code for other businesses and residences. If any number looks unfamiliar, ask your long distance operator where it is located – dial 00 – or look up the area code and phone number on the Internet. If you do not make international calls, ask your local phone company to block outgoing international calls from your line.

If you have international calls that you are disputing, let the phone company that billed you know that you are disputing them and withholding payment for the calls. You will need to pay the rest of the bill to assure your service is not disconnected.

You may file a complaint. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) can help you with calls to and from locations in California; the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) looks into complaints about state-to-state or international calls. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) may revise its regulations on international phone call scams. The FTC does not investigate complaints, but you may want to notify them of the problem. Addresses for all three Commissions follow:

CPUC  
Consumer Affairs  
505 Van Ness Ave.  
San Francisco, CA 94102

FCC, Consumer Inquiries  
and Complaints Division  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington DC 20554

FTC  
Consumer Response Center  
800 Pennsylvania Av, NW  
Washington DC 20580

Online Complaint:  
[cpuc.ca.gov](http://cpuc.ca.gov)

[fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html](http://fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html) [crc@ftc.gov](mailto:crc@ftc.gov)

Need help with a utility complaint? Call 1-800-649-7570, or use the complaint form at: [www.cpuc.ca.gov](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov).

Want someone to speak at your community group meeting? Call the CPUC Outreach Program in Los Angeles: 213-576-7058, in San Diego: 619-525-4309, in Northern California, 415-703-2074. [Jan 06]