

## Investigator Tips



### Reroute Robocalls

Robocalls—those automated phone calls delivering a recorded message—are often a nuisance and in certain cases are illegal. Other times automated calls are helpful such as when the call reminds you of an appointment or provides an important message from your child’s school.

The illegal call may try to present itself as a helpful opportunity for you as in these two examples of calls that you may have received:

- “Rachel” from “card services” who wants to help you reduce your credit card interest rate
- The unidentified voice claiming your car warranty will expire soon and urging you to extend it while you can

However, both are scams and illegal because they are trying to sell something to you and you didn’t agree to receive the calls from the businesses.

One long-standing resource to help with this problem is the **National Do Not Call Registry**. When you register your phone number(s) at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov), you are indicating that you do not want to receive telemarketing calls. Most telemarketers should not call your number once it has been on the registry for 31 days unless they have your written authorization to do so. You can register your home and mobile phone and there is no fee charged.

As most consumers have experienced, many telemarketers do not follow the rules of the National Do Not Call Registry.

So, the FTC has been exploring ways to combat robocalls by holding summits and sponsoring contests to find answers. Here we look at a couple of the winning solutions:

#### **Nomorobo - FTC Robocall Challenge Winner 2013**

Learn more at [www.nomorobo.com](http://www.nomorobo.com)

This is a free service that doesn’t need additional hardware or software. On the first ring of an incoming call, it determines if the call is from a known robocaller. If so, the call is rerouted and your phone doesn’t ring again. Legal automated calls are allowed through.

At this time, only certain carriers (more than 15) support Nomorobo and it is not yet available on traditional analog landlines or wireless phones.

#### **RoboKiller - Robocalls: Humanity Strikes Back contest winner 2015**

Learn more at [www.robokiller.com](http://www.robokiller.com)

This most-recent FTC-sponsored contest asked for a technical solution that consumers can use to identify

unwanted robocalls received on landlines or mobile phones, and block those calls.

The winner is “RoboKiller,” described in the FTC press release as an app that gives users more control over how and when they receive calls, applying white and black list filtering and offering personal settings. Although it is still in the development phase, this is one to watch. It works on both landline and mobile phones. A smart phone is required to use the app.

Other possible solutions:

### **Call-Blocking Service**

Consumers should check with their phone service provider to determine if they can help block known illegal robocalls. Many providers offer call-blocking services so

this may be an easy option but keep two things in mind before making use of call-blocking:

- 1. There may be a fee charged by your service provider
- These callers change their phone numbers often and may mask the actual phone number from which they are calling to avoid being blocked.

### **Call-Blocking Devices**

These devices can be attached to either landlines or internet phones with caller ID. There is cost involved—\$60 and up—but the cost may be worth it, especially when used in the homes of those who may be more easily taken advantage of by an unethical caller. As with any purchase, research the features of the devices available before choosing to purchase.