



Consumer Complaints:

Online: <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>

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For Immediate Release

CONSUMER ALERT: FINANCIAL SCAMS
*Beware of Debt and Other Financial Service Scams, Especially During
Post-Holiday Bill Paying Season*

WASHINGTON, January 10, 2017 – The Federal Communications Commission is alerting consumers to be aware of callers falsely offering lower credit card payments or interest rates, credit card debt relief, and improved credit scores. These scams can be more common during and after the holiday season when many consumers carry more debt than at other times of year.

The FCC has received a growing number of complaints from consumers about scammers claiming that they can offer debt relief or refinancing opportunities to reduce account balances or interest rates. Some of these callers falsely claim to be monitoring the consumer's credit or loan payment history. The victim is illegally asked for credit card numbers or personally identifiable information in false attempts to "help," then is threatened, harassed, or intimidated if they refuse to comply with the scammer's demands. These scammers then attempt to use the account information to make unauthorized purchases or access funds for fraudulent purposes.

If you are unclear if a caller is legitimate, hang up, look up the company's phone number independently on your recent statement or their legitimate website, and contact them through an official number, web form or email address to see if they called you. By initiating the communication yourself, you can verify that the request for payment is legitimate.

Anyone who believes they have been targeted by this type of scam should immediately report the incident to local police, to the Federal Trade Commission's [Complaint Assistant](#), to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's [Complaint Page](#), and to the FCC's [Consumer Help Center](#). If the scammer claims to represent a legitimate financial institution, consumers should inform those companies as well.

Consumers should always be on alert for this scam and others. These tips can help consumers deal with unwanted calls:

- Do not answer calls from unknown numbers. Let them go to voicemail.
- Register your phone number(s) to block telemarketing calls through the Do Not Call registry which protects both landline and wireless phones.
- If you receive a scam call, write down the number and file a complaint with the local police, the FTC, CFPB, and FCC.
- If you answer and the caller (often a recording) asks you to hit a button to stop getting the calls, just hang up. Scammers often use these tricks to identify – and then target – live respondents.
- Ask your phone service provider if it offers a robocall blocking service that allows subscribers to block unwanted calls. If not, encourage your provider to start offering a blocking service. You can also visit the FCC’s “Web Resources for Blocking Robocalls” at <https://www.fcc.gov/unwanted-calls> for information and resources on available robocall blocking tools to help you reduce unwanted calls.
- If you use robocall-blocking technology already, let the company that provides the service know which numbers are producing unwanted calls so they can help block those calls for you and others.

As the agency that administers and enforces the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, the FCC reviews all consumer complaints and will continue, when appropriate, to issue consumer alerts based on those complaints and other public information related to possible scams and frauds. This is part of a standing series of consumer alerts from the FCC in hopes of informing, protecting, and empowering consumers.

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