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**For Immediate Release**

**FCC PROPOSES \$116 MILLION FINE FOR TOLL-FREE TRAFFIC PUMPING ROBOCALL SCHEME**

***Nearly 10 Million Robocalls Apparently Made to Generate Toll-Free Dialing Fees for Individuals and Entities Marketing Tools for TDoS Attacks***

WASHINGTON, July 14, 2022—The Federal Communications Commission today proposed a \$116,156,250 fine for robocalls made in an apparent toll-free traffic pumping robocalling scheme. The nearly 10 million robocalls were apparently made to generate toll-free dialing fees for the robocaller. The law expressly prohibits robocalls – even non-commercial calls – made to any service for which the called party is charged for the call unless the caller has prior express consent or an emergency purpose.

An FCC Enforcement Bureau investigation found that, between January 1, 2021, and March 2, 2021, Thomas Dorsher and his company, ChariTel Inc, apparently made 9,763,599 prerecorded voice message calls to toll free numbers. Businesses reported receiving unsolicited prerecorded voice message calls that referenced an entity called “ScammerBlaster”. The prerecorded messages mentioned the harms associated with scam calls and directed the recipient to report such calls to government regulators, telephone carriers, and “ScammerBlaster,” an entity that Dorsher controls.

The FCC’s Enforcement Bureau worked with the Industry Traceback Group to trace the calls to Mr. Dorsher and ChariTel. Dorsher apparently targeted toll free numbers specifically with his robocalls because he received financial compensation for every call made to a toll free number. When a caller makes a toll free call, the toll free service provider—typically a long distance carrier—pays the caller’s local exchange carrier for originating the call and for performing the toll free database query. The called party—the customer who is assigned the toll free number (i.e., the toll free subscriber)—compensates the toll free service provider for completing the call.

When a LEC is engaged in access stimulation/traffic pumping, it will often share the compensation with its caller customers to “pump” more calls across its network. Dorsher apparently had such an arrangement with his LEC; in fact, Dorsher used revenue received for making large volumes of robocalls to toll free numbers to cover the costs of another robocalling scheme, in which Dorsher apparently used the OnTel Inc entity to proliferate the use of telephony denial of service (TDoS) tools to debilitate the telecommunication systems of entities he suspected of making illegal robocalls while employing inadequate verification methods to confirm that was the case. The Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has stated that TDoS events present a unique challenge to public safety stakeholders and can severely impede a jurisdiction’s ability to provide emergency response services.

The proposed action, formally called a Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture, or NAL, contains only allegations that advise the party (Thomas Dorsher, ChariTel Inc, OnTel Inc, and ScammerBlaster Inc) on how it has apparently violated the law and may set forth a proposed monetary penalty. The Commission may not impose a greater monetary penalty in this case than the amount proposed in the NAL. Neither the allegations nor the proposed sanctions in the NAL are final Commission actions. The party will be given an opportunity to respond and the Commission will consider the party's submission of evidence and legal arguments before acting further to resolve the matter.

Action by the Commission July 14, 2022 by Public Notice (FCC 22-57). Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, Starks, and Simington approving. Chairwoman Rosenworcel and Commissioner Starks issuing separate statements.

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*This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).*