

Media Contact:

Will Wiquist
will.wiquist@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release

FCC ADOPTS ITS FIRST RULES FOCUSED ON SCAM TEXTING

New Action Requires Wireless Carriers to Block Texts from Illegitimate Numbers and Looks to Develop More Ways to Combat Growing Robotext Problem

WASHINGTON, March 16, 2023—The Federal Communications Commission today adopted its first regulations specifically targeting the increasing problem of scam text messages sent to consumers. The new rules will require mobile service providers to block certain robotext messages that are highly likely to be illegal. Today’s action also seeks input on further regulatory actions the Commission can take to protect consumers from scam robotexts.

Text message scams are an increasingly pervasive consumer threat, with a more than 500% increase in complaints in recent years. From 2015 to 2022, robotext complaints rose from around 3,300 to 18,900 per year. And robotexts pose a unique threat to consumers: unlike robocalls, scam text messages are hard to ignore or hang-up on and are nearly always read by the recipient – often immediately. In addition, robotexts can promote links to phishing websites or websites that can install malware on a consumer’s phone.

The Report and Order adopted today requires blocking of text messages that appear to come from phone numbers that are unlikely to transmit text messages. This includes invalid, unallocated, or unused numbers. It also includes numbers that the subscriber to the number has self-identified as never sending text messages, and numbers that government agencies and other well-known entities identify as not used for texting. A second rule will require each mobile wireless provider to establish a point of contact for text senders, or have providers require their aggregator partners or blocking contractors to establish such a point of contact, which senders can use to inquire about blocked texts.

Today’s action also seeks public comment on further proposals to require providers to block texts from entities the FCC has cited as illegal robotexters. It also proposes to clarify that Do-Not-Call Registry protections – that is, prohibiting marketing messages to registered numbers – apply to text messaging and closing the lead generator loophole, which allows companies to use a single consumer consent to deliver robocalls and text messages from multiple – perhaps thousands – of marketers on subjects that may not be what the consumer had in mind. The Commission will also take further public comment on text authentication measures and other proposals to continue to fight illegal scam robotexts.

While robotexts in general fall under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act’s limits against unwanted calls to mobile phones, these new rules establish important blocking rules for mobile carriers to actively help protect consumers. Meanwhile, the FCC [recommends](#) that consumers take steps to protect themselves from text scams: do not interact in any way with suspicious texts, click on suspicious links, or provide any information via text or website. In addition, consumers can [file a complaint](#) with the FCC, forward unwanted texts to SPAM (7726), and should delete all suspicious texts.

Action by the Commission March 16, 2023 by Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 23-21). Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, Starks, and Simington approving. Chairwoman Rosenworcel and Commissioner Starks issuing separate statements.

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Media Relations: (202) 418-0500 / ASL: (844) 432-2275 / Twitter: @FCC / www.fcc.gov

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).