



Commission for
Communications Regulation

Information Notice

ComReg highlights area of possible misunderstanding with recent fixed line pricing packages

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ComReg has received a number of complaints in recent weeks in relation to cold call sales practices for fixed line telephony services.

These complaints fall into two categories. Firstly complaints concerning sales agents quoting rates on a 'per unit' rather than on a 'per minute' basis without adequately explaining the impact of this distinction and, secondly, complaints against the manner adopted by sales agents while on the call.

In the first category of complaints, it has been alleged to ComReg that sales agents cold call consumers claiming to offer very competitive packages by quoting rates on a 'per unit' rather than a 'per minute' basis (the latter would be in line with the approach most commonly adopted by telecom providers). In the absence of other supporting tariff information this may appear to be confusing to consumers. ComReg recommends consumers to be vigilant with regard to the specific rates quoted and where they have any doubt they should request a breakdown of the 'per unit' rate into a 'per minute' rate so as to be able to assess how it compares to their current provider and whether it would suit their specific needs and call patterns.

Regarding the second category of complaints, ComReg is concerned that all operators would ensure their sales agents conduct their sales conversations with consumers in accordance with highest professional standards and the relevant laws. It is ComReg's clear view that consumers should not be harassed by persistent calling. Under the Data Protection and Privacy Regulations, 2003 (S.I. 535 of 2003) it is an offence for a person to make an unsolicited telephone call for the purpose of direct marketing where the line subscriber has notified the person that it does not consent to the receipt of such a call.

If consumers believe that they have been subjected to harassment from sales agents and persistent unsolicited calls when there has been a request that no further contact be made by telephone they may consider reporting such behaviour to the relevant bodies such as the Data Protection Commissioner's Office and An Garda Síochána. Even where the substance of the complaints falls outside its remit, ComReg will address any such complaints with the operators involved.

ComReg's objectives include the promotion of the interests of consumers in relation to the use of different telecoms service providers. In order for consumers to make informed choices between competing service providers, it is imperative that consumers are presented with clear, accurate, unambiguous and transparent tariff information. ComReg conducts investigations of complaints on an on-going basis into adherence by all operators with industry codes of practice in response to issues raised by consumers and operators and ComReg is currently investigating complaints in respect of the approach outlined above.