



Media Release- 20 September 2004

ComReg imposes measures to protect Consumers from Internet Dialler Scam

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) today published measures for implementation by Internet Service Providers and Telecommunications Operators in order to protect consumers from rogue autodialler programs.

The issue of rogue autodialler programs and modem hi-jacking has affected a growing number of consumers in Ireland. Problems arise where consumers are not aware that their Internet dial-up settings have been changed to an international number. In many cases, the consumer will only realise they have fallen victim when they receive their phone bill with high call charges to international destinations.

Despite measures by ComReg and the industry to raise awareness of this issue, over 300 telephone subscribers have contacted ComReg so far this year as a result of this scam. The amounts involved have ranged from €20 to over €2,000. The continued unchecked operation of such programs will not only cause consumer hardship through excessive telephone charges but could impact on internet use by reducing confidence in the security of networks and systems.

ComReg has required that Internet Service Providers alert users of their service to the problem of rogue autodialler programs and recommend measures users can take to protect themselves from the problem.

In addition, ComReg has directed that Direct Dialling Facilities to a number of destinations from which the majority of the current problems appear to arise be suspended but that specific phone numbers may be unblocked at the request of a telephone subscriber. The full list of destinations is outlined in Appendix B of the Decision Notice.

ComReg Chairperson, John Doherty said: “ComReg has a statutory duty to protect consumers. The measures we are taking are extraordinary ones but are necessary to provide consumers with the protection they need at this time. Clearly operators have a duty of care to their costumers and while we recognise that some steps have been taken, we do not at this time consider that they go far enough. We will keep the process we are now directing under close review and will intervene again if the need arises.”

In view of the necessary changes that will need to be implemented by the operators, this decision will become effective two weeks from today.

The full decision note in relation to this matter ComReg 04/99 is available on www.comreg.ie

ENDS

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