



Media Release – 3rd November 2004

ComReg Permits Use of Mobile Telephone Interceptors

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) today published Document 04/109, a Response to Consultation on the use of Mobile Telephony Interceptors¹.

ComReg has decided to permit the use of mobile phone interceptor base stations by licensed mobile network operators (MNO) if they wish to install them as part of their network, in response to legitimate demand by specific organisations.

Interceptors allow the creation of “quiet zones”, where mobile phones will not ring, but where calls can still be made to the emergency services or to lists of approved numbers. They are different from so-called “jammers”, which prevent all calls, including emergency calls, by interfering with mobile phone networks. Jammers are illegal under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1926 and European legislation.

The use of interceptors by licensed MNOs as part of their network must remain entirely voluntary and should be based on a commercial arrangement between the parties involved. For a mobile phone interceptor to be effective it should intercept calls to and from all networks in the affected area. This implies that from a practical perspective it would be necessary for all MNOs to agree on the installation and operation of a mobile phone interceptor base station. ComReg would encourage licensed MNOs to co-operate in reaching agreements on such installations.

In deploying Mobile Phone Interceptors the following conditions will apply:

- In order to ensure that the use of such equipment does not fall foul of national or EU obligations or standards, only interceptors that are able as a minimum to recognise emergency numbers or lists of approved numbers can be installed;
- The interceptor can only intercept calls made by the MNO’s own customers in their licensed spectrum unless an agreement is in place with other mobile network operators;
- Where no such agreement is in place between MNOs, the interceptors cannot cause any degradation of services to another network;
- MNOs must notify all installations to ComReg as per their licence conditions;
- All interceptors must be compliant with the R&TTE Directive² and all other pertinent EU and national legislation.

¹ This consultation relates to the potential use of interceptors by licensed mobile phone operators in order to minimise the disruption caused by unwanted use of mobile phones. It does not relate to the interception of Posts and Telecommunications by An Garda Síochána for law enforcement purposes. For further information on the latter please see www.justice.ie .

² All radio and telecommunications terminal equipment placed on the market in Ireland is now required to comply with the Radio and Telecommunications Terminal Equipment (R&TTE) Directive 1999/5/EC as transposed into Irish law by Statutory Instrument 240 of 2001. Further information is available in ComReg Document 00/61.

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