



Commission for
Communications Regulation

Information Notice

PABX Hacking and Telephony Fraud

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1 Foreword

Over the past number of months, the Commission of Communications Regulation (ComReg) has become aware of incidents of telephone hacking resulting in financial loss to unsuspecting businesses.

The incidents have occurred predominantly during out-of-office hours where the perpetrators have gained access to the private exchange belonging to the business by hacking through unsecured points within the telephone system.

ComReg would like to make the business community aware of the issue and have taken the necessary steps to advise the relevant service providers of the incidents. The matter has also been referred to the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation.

Mike Byrne
Chairperson

2 Details of Notice

It has been brought to ComReg's attention that a number of incidents of PBX hacking and subsequent placing of fraudulent telephone calls have taken place. A PBX (Private Branch eXchange) is a telephone exchange that serves a particular business or office, as opposed to one that a common carrier or telephone company operates for many businesses or for the general public. PBXs operate as a connection between a private organisation — usually a business — and the public switched telephone network (PSTN).

These incidents tended to occur at weekend periods when business premises were unattended. Calls were placed and routed via the business' PBX and in the majority of cases the business owners were unaware of the event. In the most extreme cases potential costs of up to approximately €25,000 were raised by the perpetrators of this fraud. ComReg understands that these "attacks" were possible because the PBXs in question were not fully secure and that the victims were unaware of this potential security issue.

ComReg has also written to all relevant service providers to raise awareness of this issue with them and in order to ensure that they remain vigilant on behalf of their business customers.

These activities constitute fraud and are a matter for An Garda Síochána should they occur. Nevertheless, ComReg would like to raise awareness of the problem amongst the business community generally.

To this end, ComReg advises that businesses who are concerned about this should:-

- 1. Contact your PBX phone system supplier to ensure that the system is secured**
- 2. Report any instances to the Gardai Bureau of Fraud Investigation on 01-6663777**
- 3. Advise your telecommunications service provider immediately**

ENDS