



Media Release- 24 September 2004

## **Statement by the Commission for Communications Regulation on measures to combat rogue auto-dialler programs**

In order to tackle the persistent problem of rogue auto-dialler programs, the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) has issued directions designed to combat these scams. These measures will come into force on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October.

Many Irish consumers have been adversely affected by rogue auto-dialler programs or modem hi-jacking. Auto-dialler programs change Internet users' dial-up settings to call expensive international numbers without their knowledge. In many cases, users are not aware that they have been targeted by this scam until they receive large phone bills.

ComReg has received complaints from over 350 customers who are facing bills of up to €2,000 because of these scams. In one extreme case, one business received a phone bill of €12,000 after it had been hit by a rogue auto-dialler program.

From the 4<sup>th</sup> of October normal Direct Dialling Facilities to 13 countries, mainly in the South Pacific, will be suspended. However, contrary to some incomplete media reports, this does not mean that communications between Ireland and those destinations will cease entirely. ComReg wishes to make clear that arrangements for people who wish to make legitimate calls to those countries will be in place.

Prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> of October a list of legitimate numbers is being created. The list will include all appropriate business and residential numbers. If phone numbers are put on the list before the 4<sup>th</sup> of October they will not be blocked. It will be possible therefore to dial such numbers on and after the 4<sup>th</sup> of October.

However, if a legitimate number is barred on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, it may be unblocked once a customer asks their telecoms provider to unblock the specific number. Once the number has been unblocked for one customer, it is unblocked for all customers.

ComReg is fully conscious that the direction will initially and briefly cause some inconvenience to those who wish to call the destinations affected.

The purpose of the measure is to protect consumers from rogue auto-diallers. If these measures are not put in place these scams will continue and many more Irish consumers will be affected.

While ComReg recognises that telecoms companies have taken some steps to address this issue, increasing numbers of complaints about auto-diallers indicate that ComReg's direction\* issued on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September is necessary. ComReg will keep the measures it is implementing under review and may intervene again if the need arises. The measures will be in place for six months.

\* The full direction - ComReg 04/99 – is available on the ComReg website [www.comreg.ie](http://www.comreg.ie)

**ENDS**

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