



Telecommunications Bulletin

Customer Service Center (CSC)

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Watch for this Area Code Scam!

Calls to 809, 284, 649 and 876 area codes could result in unwanted charges

A new scam has been discovered that has led to telephone users incurring big charges on their telephone bills. Here's the way it works.

Consumers and office workers may receive a message telling them to call a phone number with an 809, 284, 649 or 876 area code in order to verify order information, handle a routine business matter, collect a prize, find out information about a sick relative or some other seemingly reasonable purpose. The caller assumes the number is a typical three-digit U.S. area code; however, the caller is actually connected to a phone number outside the United States, often in Canada or the Caribbean, and charged international call rates. Unfortunately, consumers don't find out that they have been charged higher international call rates until they receive their bill.

BCCS and AT&T recommends the following tips to help avoid the 809 area code scam:

- Return calls to familiar numbers only. As a general rule, return calls from numbers that contain familiar or recognizable area codes. Directory Assistance or long distance operators can check the area code location, but this results in a 411 charge. The best option is to determine the area code location on line at free search sites such as <http://www.yellow.com/areacode.html> or <http://www.allareacodes.com>.
- Carefully review your telephone bill to ensure you thoroughly understand the charges listed. Verify you have chosen to do business with all of the listed providers billing for those charges and have authorized additional fees invoiced.

If you believe that you have been scammed:

- Contact the CMS Business Services CRF Help Desk at 217-524-9369.
- If the carrier with whom the charge originated does not agree to resolve the problem, CMS will contact the appropriate telco and will work with you and the carrier to help remove fraudulent charges from the phone bill.