

FRAUD ALERT!

Caller ID Spoofing

Caller Identification, commonly known as Caller ID, is a widely recognized and used tool that allows you to identify a caller before you answer your telephone. Users can choose this service as an option for a fee through their chosen telephone service provider. A caller's number and/or name are displayed either on your phone or on an external display unit.

However, did you know that Caller ID is susceptible to fraud? According to the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) a practice known as "**Caller ID Spoofing**" allows the caller the ability to change the number shown on the Caller ID, change the caller's voice and can even record calls. The purpose is to disguise the identity and originator of the call. If an unscrupulous person who is looking to obtain your private financial information chooses this method to trick you into believing that the call is a legitimate call from a bank, a credit card company or any other entity, then you could be tricked into providing that information to a thief. The ability to do this has been around for a long time, but it required special hardware and technical knowledge. Today, ID Spoofing is readily available to literally anyone who wants it, regardless of their intent. Caller ID "Spoofers" can use the information gained to financially exploit unsuspecting people. Below is an example of how Caller ID Spoofing can be used to defraud:

According to a recent newspaper article, a Bucks County resident received a call from a suspected Caller ID Spoofer. The resident's phone showed the call originating from the tax office of a local Bucks County tax collector. It appeared as if the call was legitimately from the tax collector's office. However, upon investigation it was learned that the tax collector was not phoning the resident. It was determined that the call very possibly was from a con artist seeking personal information with the intent to defraud the resident. The resident did not provide any information.

Although there are useful and legitimate applications of the software, there is no way to screen for a customer's intent. There is some common sense **ACTIONS** that can help prevent a scammer from being successful:

- Never give personal information out to anyone who calls you
- Do not be engaged in conversation by the caller-remember these people are "professional storytellers"
- Hang up immediately
- Remember that just because a number is displayed on the Caller ID, this is *not* verification that it is from the source it claims
- Immediately inquire about the call with the real agency the caller claimed to be representing
- Report the call right away to local law enforcement, the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office of Consumer Protection (1-800-441-2555) and the Bucks County Office of Consumer Protection (1-800-942-2669)

As of May 2010, both the U.S. House (H.R. 1258, 2010) and Senate (S. 30, 2009) have passed versions of a bill to make it illegal to transmit false caller ID information with the intent to defraud or deceive. When these versions are reconciled, passed and signed into U.S. federal law, prosecutors will be able to charge people under this federal law.

BUCKS COUNTY CRIMES AGAINST OLDER ADULTS TASK FORCE

Bucks County District Attorney's Office
215-348-6344

Bucks County Area Agency on Aging
215-348-0510

Bucks County Coroner's Office
215-348-3852

Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA)
1-800-675-6900

A Woman's Place (AWP)
1-800-220-8116

Bucks County Office of Consumer Protection
215-348-6060

Bucks County Register of Wills
215-348-6265

US Dept. of Health and Human Services
Investigations, Office of the Inspector General

www.crimesagainstolderadultsbucks.org
24 - HOUR HOTLINE: 1-800-490-8505