



WATERTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT

DETECTIVE DIVISION

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Annoying/Harassing Telephone Calls

If you are plagued by mysterious hang-up calls, there are several ways to fight back.

To trace a call, when someone hangs up on the other line, you hang up, too. Then pick up the phone and dial *57. Stay on the line and a voice will tell you if the call was traceable. Telemarketer's computers are generally not traceable.

If the call was traceable, a voice will tell you that (without giving you the phone number) and record its finding. If the call is traced, you will be charged \$3.25. If it is not traced, there is no charge.

To pursue the identity of the caller, you must call your local police department and ask them to file a complaint in your name. The police will give you a file number which you give to Verizon's annoyance call bureau. Then, each time you get the annoying call, hang up and dial *57.

Within a 30-day period, if the phone company traces three calls to the same phone number, it will tell police, who will notify you. For more information about this option, call Verizon's annoyance call bureau at (800) 640-2043.

You can also buy a caller ID box, which displays the phone number (and sometimes the name) of each caller, unless the number is blocked. Most electronic stores that sell telephone equipment offer this box, which costs between \$20 and \$100. The box is used in conjunction with Verizon's caller ID service, which costs between \$4.95 and \$5.95 a month. Some Verizon promotions offer the box for free.

You can also call *69 after the hang-up, which automatically dials the phone number of the last caller. This costs 50¢ for each successful activation and the maximum monthly charge is \$4.50. If you want unlimited monthly use, it costs \$2.25 a month.

Another strategy is to reduce the number of telemarketing firms that call you. In Massachusetts you can do it three ways:

- By federal law, when a telemarketer calls, you can tell them you want to be removed from their list. If they call you back, they face penalties in small claims court.
- Write the Telephone Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, PO Box 9014, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11735-9014. (The association says most national telemarketers check this list.) Give them your name, address, and phone number with area code.
- Verizon keeps a statewide auto dialers' exclusion list, which businesses are expected to check. (However, this year, only one business has asked for it and last year only three did.) To get on this list, give your name, address, and phone number to Verizon, CRC, (Customer Response Center), 350 Granite St., Braintree, MA 02184 or call (800) 555-5000.

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