

# Gov't addresses 'robocall' annoyance with new ban

August 27 2009, By DEBORAH YAO , AP Business Writer

---

(AP) -- Americans tired of having their dinners interrupted by phone calls touting car warranties or vacation packages will soon get some relief.

The [Federal Trade Commission](#) said Thursday it is banning many types of prerecorded telemarketing solicitations, known as robocalls. Currently, [consumers](#) must specifically join a do-not-call list to avoid them. Starting Sept. 1, telemarketers will first need written permission from the customer to make such calls.

"American consumers have made it crystal clear that few things annoy them more than the billions of commercial telemarketing robocalls they receive every year," said Jon Leibowitz, chairman of the FTC.

Violators will face penalties of up to \$16,000 per call.

Don't expect phone solicitations to disappear completely, though.

Calls that are not trying to sell goods and services to consumers will be exempt, such as those that provide information like flight cancellations and delivery notices and those from debt collectors.

Other calls not covered include those from politicians, charities that contact consumers directly, banks, insurers, phone companies, surveys and certain health care messages such as prescription notifications. The FTC said those don't fall under its jurisdiction.

And calls made by humans rather than automated systems will still be allowed, unless the phone number is on the National Do Not Call Registry.

But the FTC said the ban should cover most robocalls, forcing marketers to turn to more expensive live calls, or ramp up efforts in direct mail, e-mail and TV ads.

The ban is part of amendments to the FTC's Telemarketing Sales Rule announced a year ago.

Because the ban has been known, telemarketers already have been phasing out robocalls, said Tim Searcy, chief executive of the American Teleservices Association, a trade group whose members include telemarketers.

He said the public won't see much of a change.

"For the consumer, the behavior is going to look the same Sept. 1 as it did Aug. 31," he said.

Searcy also said the ban will do little to stop calls touting illegal scams.

People who get an unauthorized call can file complaints with the commission online or by calling 1-877-FTC-HELP.

"If consumers think they're being harassed by robocallers, they need to let us know, and we will go after them," Leibowitz said.

---

On the Net:

Complaint form: [www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov](http://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov)

Do Not Call registry: [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov)

*©2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.*

Citation: Gov't addresses 'robocall' annoyance with new ban (2009, August 27) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-08-govt-robocall-annoyance.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.