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CYBER DIVISION

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

*Internet Crime Complaint Center
Private Industry Notification*



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(U) Toll Free Traffic Pumping is a method used to artificially generate calls to toll free telephone numbers. Utilizing this method along with Caller ID Spoofing, fraudsters are taking advantage of the Telecommunication Industry exposing them to large financial losses.

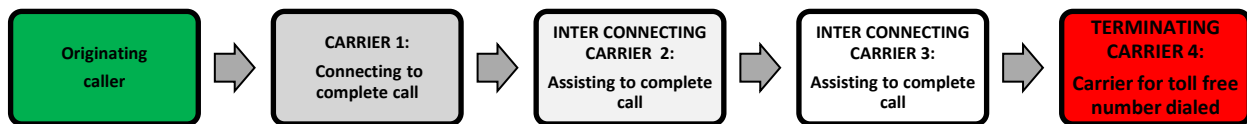
(U) What is Toll Free Traffic Pumping?

Toll Free Traffic Pumping is the abuse of toll free numbers, where a computer/server is utilized to artificially generate calls to toll free numbers. The Calling Party Numbers (the numbers making the calls) are spoofed and the duration of these calls varies greatly. The duration of the calls is largely dependent on the terminating equipment of the toll free number and its configuration.

For example, calls answered live will usually be “dead air” calls, where the called party hangs up in a relatively short time period due to no response. Calls that are answered by auto attendants, or interactive voice response units, may have calls with a tone or music playing with durations as long as 600 minutes.

(U) How do legitimate calls occur?

For any call traffic, several carriers help complete calls. The individual carriers only have visibility of what carrier they receive calls from, and to which carrier they send calls (i.e., Carrier 4 can only see calls from Carrier 3).



Carriers enter into revenue share agreements to pay one another when assisting to complete calls. These agreements are regulated by the FCC¹. Revenue share agreements can be an acceptable practice and usually includes smaller wireless or wireline service providers, cable companies, and ISP's.

(U) How are the fraudsters generating money from Toll Free Traffic Pumping?

In this context of toll free traffic pumping, the revenue share agreements become a vehicle for fraud. The fraudsters, or traffic pumpers, are typically several carriers behind a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier (CLEC), who offers a share of the revenue paid by the toll free service providers for connecting toll free

¹ <http://www.fcc.gov/what-we-do>



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calls to their networks. As illustrated in the diagram, the toll free service provider (Carrier 4) cannot determine the true origination call due to multiple handoffs. Carriers may unknowingly be carrying toll free traffic pumping calls.

(U) What are the fraudsters utilizing to do Toll Free Traffic Pumping?

The fraudsters conducting toll free traffic pumping are utilizing caller ID spoofing to make calls appear to be from one source or location, when they are in fact from the fraudster. Spoofing calls is a violation of the Truth in Caller ID Act².

(U) What may this activity be violating legally?

Generating fake calls may be a violation of Title 18 section 941 18 U.S.C. 1343—Elements of Wire Fraud.³

(U) Who can be affected by Toll Free Traffic Pumping?

Any person, company, or public service with a toll free phone number for commercial or public safety services can be affected by Toll Free Traffic Pumping (for example: call centers, customer care lines, or public health lines).

(U) What are the implications of receiving Toll Free Traffic Pumping?

- Could exceed capacity and cause a telephony denial of service (TDoS)
- Could cause lost productivity in the call center
- Could impact call center metrics
- Could impact normal response to customer service
- Could cause unnecessary reports of troubles to service provider and equipment providers
- Voicemail capacity is maxed out with dead air calls and messages cannot be received
- End user incurs expenses for the unwanted calls

(U) What should a person look for to identify if Toll Free Traffic Pumping is happening?

The “symptoms” of toll free traffic pumping may vary. However, people who are responsible for answering the phone calls may notice some of these indicators:

- Dead air calls, where no one answers and there is no sound.
- Calls where the content is repeated, such as a tone or music.
- There may be a noticeably large increase in monthly charges.

² [hxxp://transition.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/callerid.pdf](https://transition.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/callerid.pdf)

³ [hxxp://www.justice.gov/usao/eousa/foia_reading_room/usam/title9/crm00941.htm](https://www.justice.gov/usao/eousa/foia_reading_room/usam/title9/crm00941.htm)



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- Calls can be made during normal business hours. However, it may be noticeable that calls are occurring during non-business hours (evenings or weekends) or when there is normally no one in the office.

This is not a complete list of indicators or patterns that have been detected.

(U) What should be done if any of these indicators are noticed?

If you have experienced the above indicators of toll free traffic pumping, please report the incident to your telecommunications carrier and file a report with the Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.IC3.gov.

Specific details about the event may assist carriers in identifying this activity. If any of the above “abnormal” calls occur, please document the following:

- What type of calls were received (dead air, music, etc)
- The date the phone call(s) were received
- The time of day/night the phone call(s) were received
- The number(s) that appeared on the caller ID
- The number that received the phone call(s)

If requested, this information should be provided to your telecommunications carrier or to law enforcement.