

## **Ringless Voicemail Scams**

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### **What You Need To Know And How You Can Protect Yourself**

Have you ever received a new voicemail notification and noticed that you actually never received a call in the first place?

You were most likely involved in a ringless voicemail scam, but don't worry you are not alone. In fact, estimated by the Federal Communications Commission ([FCC](#)), over 2.4 billion automated spam calls are made every single month. With a 60% increase from previous years, around 3.5 million complaints were issued to the Federal Trade Commission ([FTC](#)) in 2016.

A ringless voicemail may contain messages trying to get you to buy something or even threaten to tell you that you've done something wrong or owe money. Some people get scammed by giving away their personal information or even paying an unknown fee out of fear. There's a lot of phone scammers out there but by spreading the word and passing along the knowledge to friends and family we will be able to identify these scams and avoid being victims.

By now most people have had their own experience with some sort of unwanted telemarketer calling you

to either sell something or even try to scam you. Going back just a few years, most families had household landline phones. Around the same time every day, when everyone got off of work and sat down to eat dinner is usually when telemarketers would call. Nowadays most people have their own personal cell phones instead of a shared landline at home. With the popularity of cell phones and the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991 ([TCPA](#)), telemarketers suffered a blow to their phone-based business model when it became illegal to use automated or prerecorded calls to an individual's cellular number without their consent.

The technology for ringless voicemail has actually been around longer than one would think. For about a decade now this kind of technology was actually used by banks, doctors, and dentist offices for unintrusive appointment reminder notifications. With the ability to send out over one hundred calls per minute, this technology's capabilities were destined to become manipulated by phone marketing companies. Eventually, they found a loop in the system to get around the laws stated in the TCPA of 1991.

Unfortunately, there are currently no laws regulating a ringless voicemail because there is a gray area of whether or not these are considered actual phone calls or an alternative form of telecommunication. This goes for individuals on the [Do Not Call List](#) also because the ringless voicemails are not exactly considered phone calls. With that being said, this poses an unavoidable problem of not being able to stop them. Since the phone is not receiving a call, there is no way to limit or block the number. If this is left unregulated, there may be a severe consequence to individuals receiving an unlimited amount of these ringless voicemails.

There are those in favor of the ringless voicemail to be unregulated. The Republican National Committee thinks that putting a limit on ringless voicemails may actually be a violation of free speech. For them, this is a way to spread political activism during election campaigns. While there is some support for ringless voicemails, the FCC is considering an approach to prohibit them. For the time being, this leads us to wonder what can be done about it.

To be clear, until laws are set in place to regulate ringless voicemails there really is nothing we can do to stop receiving them. However, here are a few suggestions to keep in mind that will help prevent yourself from becoming a victim of a phone scam.

- **Use Common Sense** If there is someone requesting any kind of personal information for any reason from a phone number that you do not recognize, it's probably a scam. Personal information may include; your full name, address, date of birth, email address, credit card number, or social security number.
- **Ask Questions** If you are truly concerned and unsure, simply ask questions to get to the bottom of the situation. More often than not, a representative from a legit company will be able to answer any and all of your questions instantaneously and confidently. If there is an initial pause or an ongoing struggle to come up with answers to your questions, there is something wrong.
- **Think Critically** Receiving a voicemail about winning a prize or being responsible for owing a fee unbeknownst to you can cause an initial concern. For some, this may make them panic and dial their call back number to get more information. This is exactly what they want you to do, so stay calm and relisten to the message. Listen if the message is vague and can apply to anyone. For example, if the person doesn't initially identify themselves as an individual or company, if they

address you as “sir” or “ma’am”, or if they don’t specify exactly what the nature of the call is for. This may be a generic message they send to hundreds or thousands of people hoping to get lucky.

If you’re a company in the telephone marketing industry and you don’t condone this tactic but instead abide by the TCPA, check out the Searchbug [Identify Phone Number Tools](#) to protect your company from TCPA lawsuits. We’ll help ensure your [phone number list is clean and compliant](#).

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