



Home | Search Site

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Crime
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Government
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General Opinions
Enforcing Tobacco Laws
Protecting Utility
Customers

Resources

File a Consumer
Complaint
Other Complaint
Resources
News Releases &
Publications
Legal Resources
Jobs & Internships
Contact Us

Consumer Advisory Bulletin

How to Avoid Unwanted "Junk Mail" and Telephone Solicitations

Would you like to reduce the number of unwanted telephone and mail solicitations you receive? Many consumers appreciate the convenience of shopping from home when they receive legitimate solicitations for goods and services, but others would like to reduce what they consider "junk mail" or "junk calls." Our names and numbers are often sold on solicitation lists. Here are a few tips to avoid unwanted calls and mail:

- Reduce unwanted phone calls by registering for the national Do Not Call list – dial 888-382-1222, or go to www.DoNotCall.gov.
- Tell phone solicitors, "Please do not call me again." When you make this request, the Telephone Consumer Protection Act requires the caller to enter your name on a "do-not-call" list and not to make further telephone solicitations to you.
- Ask credit reporting agencies not to give your name to solicitors. Credit reporting agencies sell lists to credit card marketers and others. Upon request, credit reporting agencies will remove your name from the lists they provide. Call 1-888-5-OPT-OUT (1-888-567-8688.) An oral request will remove your name for two years, or you can follow the prompts for a written form to request permanent removal.
- Ask the Direct Marketing Association to remove your name from lists it manages. Reputable businesses honor such requests. To reduce telephone solicitations, send your name, address and phone number to: DMA Telephone Preference Service, P.O. Box 1559, Carmel, New York 10512.

To reduce mail solicitations, write to: DMA Mail Preference Service, P.O. Box 643, Carmel, New York 10512. Be sure to include all variations of your name as they appear in mailings. It probably will take a few months before you notice a significant decrease in solicitations, but it should help.

You may have to contact these services more than once to keep your name off solicitation lists -- and, of course, "scam-artists" may ignore these lists and contact you. But the preference services still may help you reduce unwanted calls and mail.

- Avoid giving out financial or unnecessary personal information on things like prize offers, sweepstakes entries, warranty cards, or other information cards. This information may well be sold many times over, driving up the number of mail and telephone solicitations you receive.

For information, or to file a complaint about a fraudulent solicitation, contact the Consumer Protection Division, Hoover Bldg., Des Moines, IA 50319. Call 515-281-5926 or 888-777-4590 toll free.

[Return to Consumer Advisories](#)