



Consumer Connections

Brought to you by the Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, FCC

April 2019

Distracted Driving Awareness

April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. The popularity of mobile devices has had some unintended and sometimes deadly consequences. We urge you to always put down your phone while driving and take these steps to ensure safety:

Give clear instructions.

If your family includes a new driver, give them simple, clear instructions not to use their wireless devices while driving. Before new drivers get their licenses, discuss the fact that taking their eyes off the road – even for a few seconds – could cause someone injury or even death.

Lead by example. No one should text and drive. Be an example for others and if you need to text or talk on the phone, pull over to a safe place. Set rules for yourself and your household regarding distracted driving.

Become informed and be active. Tell family, friends and organizations to which you belong about the importance of driving without distractions.

Spoofing: How to Protect Yourself from Scams

If you have a telephone, whether a cell phone or a landline, chances are you have received spoofed robocalls. Not only are these calls annoying, scammers can use Caller ID spoofing to perpetrate fraud upon consumers. What is Caller ID spoofing? It's when a caller changes the information on a phone's caller ID display to disguise their identity. Spoofing is often used in an attempt to steal money from consumers, or to trick them into giving away valuable personal information that can be used in fraudulent activity or sold illegally. There are some instances where spoofing can be used legitimately, for example, to display the number of a business such as your pharmacy or your children's school. We encourage consumers to use caution when answering calls. Learn more at [fcc.gov/spoofing](https://www.fcc.gov/spoofing).

Here are some tips to avoid being scammed by a spoofed call:

- Don't answer calls from unknown numbers.
- If you answer and it's not who you expected, don't hang on, hang up!
- If a caller asks you to press a button to stop getting calls, don't do it, just hang up.
- Never assume an unexpected call from a business or governmental entity is legitimate, especially if they demand immediate payment or ask for personal information like Social Security numbers, account numbers or passwords. Hang up and call the business or entity using a number you can verify on a bill or an official website.
- Ask your phone company about call blocking tools for landlines or apps for mobile devices.
- Report spoofing scams to law enforcement, the FCC (FCC Consumer Complaint Center: consumercomplaints.fcc.gov) and the FTC (ftccomplaintassistant.gov).

As part of our continuing efforts to educate consumers about illegal robocalls and spoofing, the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) has:

- Joined forces with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to provide joint emails to Veterans and their families to share consumer resources and tips.
- Released a consumer alert: This Tax Season, [Don't Fall for Spoofed IRS Calls](#).
- Released a blog post by CGB Bureau Chief, Patrick Webre, as part of the FCC's National Consumer Protection Week campaign – [FCC Stands United with Consumers to Stop Spoofing Scams](#)

Upcoming Events

Disability Advisory Committee Meeting

([Event page link](#))

April 10, 2019;

9 am – 12 pm EST

Livestream: fcc.gov/live

Open Commission Meetings

April 12, 2019

([Event page link](#))

May 9, 2019

([Event page link](#))

10:30 am - 12:30 pm EST

Room TW-C305

445 12th Street S.W.

Washington, DC

The Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility (Chairman's AAA)

June 18, 2019

Ceremony held at M-Enabling Summit in Arlington, VA

More info:

fcc.gov/chairmansaaa

FCC Events: fcc.gov/events

Broadcast Transition Information

Did you know that some TV stations may be changing frequencies in your market? If you watch TV with an antenna, please remember to rescan!

Phase 2 of the broadcast transition began 2/1/2018 and ends 4/12/2019;

Phase 3 begins 4/13/2019 and ends 6/21/2019

More Info including a map that allows viewers to insert an address to see the frequency change timeframe for most local channels:

fcc.gov/TVrescan

Rescan Assistance

Consumer Call Center:

1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); Press 6

FCC Welcomes Commissioner Geoffrey Starks



Geoffrey Starks was nominated to serve as a Commissioner on the Federal Communications Commission by the President and was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate on January 2, 2019. He was sworn into office on January 30, 2019. Commissioner Starks has a long career of public and private sector experience. Most recently, Commissioner Starks served as Assistant Bureau Chief in the FCC's Enforcement Bureau. Previously, he served as Senior Counsel in the Office of the Deputy Attorney General at the U.S. Department of Justice. Prior to his entry into federal public service, Commissioner Starks was an attorney at the law firm Williams & Connolly, clerked for the Honorable Judge Duane Benton on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit, served as a legislative staffer in the Illinois State Senate, and worked as a financial analyst. (*Full biography at fcc.gov*).

Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau Welcomes Ed Bartholme



Ed Bartholme joined the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) as Associate Bureau Chief to lead the Commission's education and outreach efforts. Previously, Ed spent 10 years as the Executive Director and CEO of Call For Action, Inc. (CFA), an international, non-profit network of hotlines serving consumers and small businesses. Ed brings much knowledge and expertise to CGB from this position where he worked to broaden CFA's network of 25 media affiliate offices to now include radio, TV and print outlets. He developed consumer education guides on a wide variety of issues and was frequently interviewed as an expert by local and

national media outlets. Additionally, he oversaw volunteer teams at 23 remote offices and spearheaded the redesign of the case management database used by the organization to track consumer complaints. Ed has worked with the Commission recently as the Chair of the Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) and represented Call For Action on various other consumer focused working groups and advisory panels. CAOD met with Ed to discuss his new role in CGB.

CAOD: Are there any topics that are particularly important to you?

Ed: Consumer education and ensuring that consumers have access to communications technologies that meet their needs is a major priority for me. I look forward to diving into the full spectrum of consumer issues that CGB handles, including illegal robocalls - the top consumer protection priority at the FCC.

CAOD: What made you interested in advocating for consumers?

Ed: I believe that it is important for everyone to have a voice and for everyone to have a place to go to for help. The consumer experience is universal and I enjoy doing work that can positively impact so many. The Commission has a lot of great tools and programs to educate consumers and I am excited to help get the word out.

CAOD: As a consumer yourself, what's your favorite technology that you rely on either for work or for fun?

Ed: I would definitely say, that like so many others, I am very attached to my smartphone. It is incredible to think that we have so much technology and so many ways to communicate in a single device.

Volunteer Day at Food & Friends

April is National Social Security Month

Nearly all of your financial and medical records are connected to your Social Security number, which is why data thieves are constantly trying to nab it for use in fraud schemes or for selling it illicitly. Robocall scammers use spoofing to deliberately falsify the caller ID that appears on your phone, disguising their identities in attempts to steal your Social Security number and other valuable personal information.

Remember, if a caller says they represent a government agency and demands immediate payment or personal information, hang up and call back using the number on the agency's website.

FCC Consumer Help Center

[fcc.gov/consumers](https://www.fcc.gov/consumers)

FCC Consumer Complaint Center

consumercomplaints.fcc.gov

Stay Connected with the FCC:

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[Twitter](#)
[YouTube](#)

Contact CAOD:

If you have questions about consumer issues and outreach at the FCC or recommendations for this newsletter, please contact outreach@fcc.gov

Visit CAOD's Webpage:

fcc.gov/outreach



CAOD organized a day of service at Food & Friends in Washington DC. Several FCC staff volunteered their time to help pack food to meet the nonprofit's mission of delivering specialized, nutritious meals and groceries to people in the community facing HIV/AIDS, cancer and other life-challenging illnesses.

Older Americans Month

May is Older Americans Month. [Pew Research](#) found that 42% of seniors are not online. At the FCC, we encourage everyone to get online to experience the many benefits that broadband provides, whether it is connecting with community, friends and family; using streaming services for entertainment or accessing health care information and services. More information is available at fcc.gov/connected.

Here are some tips for a safer online experience:

- Always add a password when possible (smartphones, tablets, and laptops should always be password protected)
- Never leave your mobile phone unattended in a public place or visible in an unattended car.
- Don't have your web browser remember passwords and input them for you, particularly for your financial, legal and medical accounts.
- Only use secure connections when entering any personal data online, never send personal data over public Wi-Fi connections

Rural Tour in Georgia and South Carolina

Beginning on May 6, the FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau will tour the South East Region of the country, visiting cities in South Carolina and Georgia. This Rural Tour will be the third in a series of tours designed to build partnerships and educate rural and underserved communities about FCC consumer topics. The South East Region Rural Tour will include meetings with local leaders and consumers, "drop-offs" of informational material to be distributed by local organizations (such as schools and libraries) and coordinating consumer-facing events with local entities.

As with our previous Rural Tours to the [Pacific Northwest \(Washington and Oregon\)](#) and the [Appalachian Region \(West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee\)](#), we will provide information and resources on telecommunication issues that affect people's daily lives, including tips to avoid scams that cost consumers millions of dollars each year. For more information, please contact outreach@fcc.gov.