

## Here's a ring of truth about phone scam

Have you received an e-mail warning about possible scam artists using area codes 809, 284 or 876 to dupe you into sending them money in recent weeks? If so, don't hit the panic button. The e-mail itself is somewhat of a hoax — or at least its details are greatly exaggerated. So says AT&T on its Web site, as well as ScamBusters.org.

“Periodically, e-mails warning of a scam involving calls from the 809 area code circulate,” AT&T reports. “Some of the information in the e-mail is true. “The problem comes from the fact that some phone numbers in the ‘809’ area code are ‘pay-per-call’ numbers (such as 900 numbers in the U.S.) — but there are no legal requirements that callers be informed that they are being charged extra in the Caribbean. When you return one of these pay-per-call 809 calls, the scamsters try to keep you on the phone as long as possible, and you may be charged very high rates for the call, reportedly up to \$25 per minute.”

### How to avoid phone scams

- \* “Return calls to familiar numbers only. As a general rule, return pages and voice mail messages only from numbers that contain familiar or recognizable area codes,” the Web site reports. “You may call your directory assistance or long-distance operator to check on the area code location.”
- \* “Carefully read your telephone bill. Make sure you only receive charges from your provider of choice. Ensure you thoroughly understand charges listed on your phone bill, have chosen to do business with all of the listed providers billing for those charges and have authorized additional fees invoiced. If your local service has changed, you will receive a final bill from the former provider and a notice concerning your service disconnection.”
- \* “Be suspicious of alleged changes in your service. Some customers have reported receiving calls or mailings from companies claiming that they bill or provide services on behalf of AT&T companies. If you are so contacted, assume it is untrue until you have verified it with an AT&T customer service representative, whose contact number is listed in the front of your phone book or on your AT&T phone bill.”

**Source:** <http://www.indexjournal.com/news/index.html>