



For Immediate Release
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*******CONSUMER ALERT*****CONSUMER ALERT*******

MADIGAN, AT&T and TDS WARN CONSUMERS OF CONTINUED TELECOMMUNICATIONS FRAUD ATTEMPTS

Lake County, IL – Attorney General Lisa Madigan joined today with AT&T and TDS to warn phone customers of fraudulent practices underway to change their long distance providers and increase their rates. Nearly a week since the first notification, telecommunications customers in Illinois, including several served by TDS, are still being approached by a fraudulent company offering significant reductions in long distance calling plans.

In a scam known as “Vishing,” which is similar to the “Phishing” schemes online, customers are offered a 35 percent discount on their Long Distance service and are asked to “verify a few things” before receiving the discount. This could mean a customer is asked to clarify their address and phone number, give out a maiden name or other personal identifiable information.

Sometimes the caller says they are with TDS, AT&T or other established companies, which adds to the confusion.

“Consumers need to be prepared if they receive this type of phone call,” said Madigan. “Do not provide any personal information over the telephone, and if you believe you have received such a call, please report the call to your phone company as well as to the Attorney General’s consumer protection hotline.”

“Customers of telecommunications services need to be cautious. Generally, customers can tell from the level of professionalism and grammar that it is a fraudulent call. The caller is speaking quickly and trying to confuse the customer with names and requests. And when pressed for more information such as a company Website or name they generally hang up,” states Andrew Petersen, Director of Legislative Affairs and Public Relations for TDS.

In the latest fraudulent report received from a TDS customer, it was determined the caller offering the phony long distance deal was using the AT&T name as his employer. When the customer informed the imposter he had TDS for long distance, the caller stated ‘TDS and AT&T’ have merged to become the same company. “This is simply not true. AT&T and TDS are not the same company,” remarked Petersen.

Rob Biederman, a spokesman for AT&T Illinois, said, “AT&T has long been committed to helping consumers and businesses avoid being deceived by the unethical business practices of suspicious marketers. We join Attorney General Madigan and TDS in cautioning potential victims to be on the lookout for this type of marketing behavior.”

Both business and residential customers are being targeted. It is possible that consumers other than TDS customers have been or will also be targeted. TDS urges customers to check directly with the company by calling 1- 877-METROCOM to validate any promotional offerings they receive. If suspicious, of a request for personal information, AT&T customers can call 1-800-924-1000 to validate any such calls.

Consumers should report any suspicious telemarketing activity to the Illinois Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-386-5438.

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