

TELECOMMUNICATIONS NUMBERING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Nuisance Calls caused by Mis-dialling

Purpose

This paper seeks members' views on the principles/criteria to be adopted by the Telecommunications Authority (TA) to deal with complaints relating to nuisance calls caused by mis-dialling to close resemblance of telecommunications numbers assigned to network operators, service providers and end customers.

Background

2. OFTA has received a complaint from a mobile phone user about repeated nuisance calls to his mobile phone with number 930a bcde. The complainant reported that the nuisance calls were in fact generated by some users dialling to an Internet Service Provider (ISP)'s Internet gateway of prime access number 30ab cdef. It is believed that users of this Internet gateway may have forgotten to delete the digit "9", the usual PABX outgoing line seizure access code, when using direct exchange line (DEL) properly at home instead of PABX extension at office. As a result, the mis-dialled calls with the wrong calling number 9 30ab cdef on DEL were all routed to the complainant's mobile phone number 930a bcde.

3. The complainant also reported that the number of nuisance calls vary from several calls a day to several calls per week. In view of the repeated nuisance to his mobile phone over the last 12 months, the complainant had requested the ISP to suspend the use of 30ab cdef as its Internet gateway prime access number.

4. On the other hand, the ISP has proposed a number of remedial measures and was willing to implement them to alleviate the disturbance to the complainant. However, it refuses to suspend the entire use of the above access number. The remedial measures proposed by the ISP include:

- (a) A new dial-up number is added such that all new subscribers would be notified of this new dial up number in the welcome letters and also insert a reminder note of the new dial up number in its web site;
- (b) Though the original "30ab cdef" access number would not be further advertised nor promoted to users by the ISP, it is used as

alternative number to the new number for back up purpose in case that the new number is busy;

- (c) The ISP would provide an auto-run installer program so that their subscribers could access their Internet gateway platform through the program without the need to set up the dial-up number for each Internet access; and
- (d) The ISP would be willing to offer some secretarial service free of charge to the complainant if he accepts it in order to screen the mis-dialled calls for him.

5. Even though the ISP has implemented the measures (a) to (c) above, the complainant is of the view that the measures including (d) above are not effective to combat the problem as he is still receiving nuisance calls from time to time. During the past 12 months, OFTA has received 2 complaints of similar disputes.

TA's considerations on the above case

6. For the above case, as both the mobile phone users and the ISP use their assigned numbers in accordance with the Code of Practice relating to the use of numbers and codes in Hong Kong (COP), the TA primarily considers that they are both legitimate users of the assigned numbers. The problem was in fact generated by the calling parties who dialled the wrong numbers.

7. From the service point of view, some network operators have suggested to use the “do-not-disturb” feature to screen out those mis-dialled calls. Although this approach may help minimizing the nuisance, it would also cause some inconveniences and involve additional costs to the affected customers. The TA would like to seek members' views on whether there are any alternative technical means to help the complainant not to receive the nuisance calls.

8. In order not to receive nuisance calls, it may be usually the case that the affected parties would like to change their numbers. However, for this case, the complainant claims that he would choose not to change the number though he continues to receive the nuisance calls. There seems to be lack of rules or assignment principles stipulated in the COP governing which party should give way and change their assigned numbers. The TA would like to seek members' view on the following issues:

- Whether there are any technical means to screen out any nuisance or mis-dialled calls to resolve the dispute and problem;
- Whether the TA should be involved and need to develop some principles or criteria under the COP to serve as guidance to the industry to resolve the above and similar problems;
- If so, what principles and criteria should be adopted? For example,

if there is proof showing that there are mis-dialled calls created by one party directly or indirectly to the other one, the party creating the mis-dialled call problem should be responsible and need to change to other number. Alternatively, despite which party creates the mis-dialled call problem, the party who is assigned with the number with the date later than that of the other one should change to another number.

- Under what situation and scenarios should the above principles and criteria be justifiably exercised and applied.

Advice Sought

9. Members are invited to give their views and comments on the above issues presented in this paper.

Office of the Telecommunications Authority
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