

# Internet Protocol (IP) Relay Fraud

---

Washington Telecommunications Relay Services (WATRS) was established to provide relay service to deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and speech disabled residents of Washington State in accordance to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; Title IV Telecommunications. The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) administers the WATRS through a contract with Sprint-Nextel, which offers both Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS) and Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) to Washington residents. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) administers the internet-based relay services including Internet Protocol (IP) relay.

As a state TRS administrator, certified by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), we note that businesses are unfortunately victimized by scammers who take advantage of the relay services to conduct their fraudulent activities; however, the deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and speech disabled communities are also victimized as businesses hang up on relay calls. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) businesses are required to accept calls, receive orders, or do business by phone with members of the public who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or who have a speech disability and utilize Telecommunication Relay Services (TRS).

In their consumer advisory fact sheet, the FCC encourages businesses to become part of the partnership that involves the FCC, law enforcement agencies, informed businesses, and TRS providers “to combat fraud and ensure that people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or who have a speech disability have equal access to the products and services any business has to offer”.

As a result of the past and present fraudulent incidents, the FCC offers a consumer advisory fact sheet that explains the TRS scenario and methods that businesses can utilize to avoid being victimized. Please go to the following web link to view this information: <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/iprelayfraud.html>.

Washington Relay’s present TRS provider, Sprint Relay, also offers a tip sheet to assist businesses from becoming a potential victim of this type of scam. It is suspected that a majority of these calls are from an international location with intent to defraud the business. Sprint Relay indicated that since the FCC has permitted all relay service providers to register internet-based TRS relay users, IP Relay calls are processed only for people who provide a legitimate residential address to prove their identity. This process helps identify legitimate relay users and reduce the number of scam activities through the relay services.

In addition to the FCC and Sprint Relay’s IP Relay fraud tips and fact sheets, Washington Relay through the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, an office within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has a “Don’t Hang Up” campaign to encourage businesses and the general public to contact the Washington Relay representatives to arrange a free presentation. The presentation will cover the aspects of the Washington Relay services and answer questions from business owners on how they can protect their business from fraudulent transactions.

For more information about Washington Relay “Don’t Hang Up” campaign and the available services to Washington residents, please go to the following web link:

<http://www.washingtonrelay.com/hangup.html>

If you have questions, please contact Steve Peck, TRS Program Manager at 360-339-7382 or email at [pecksc@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:pecksc@dshs.wa.gov).