



**Press Release  
Major Scam - Phone Numbers**



**MAJOR SCAM  
Received from the Minnesota Sheriff's Association  
March 13, 2002**

Don't respond to Emails, phone calls, or web pages which tell you to call an "809," "284," or "876" Phone Number. This is a very important issue of ScamBusters because it alerts you to a scam that is spreading extremely quickly, can easily cost you \$2,400 or more, and is difficult to avoid unless you are aware of it. We'd like to thank Verizon for bringing this scam to our attention. This scam has also been identified by the National Fraud Information Center and is costing victims lots of money. There are lots of different permutations of this scam.

**HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:**

You will receive a message on your answering machine or your pager, which asks you to call a number beginning with area code 809. The reason you're asked to call varies. It can be to receive information about a family member who has been ill, to tell you someone has been arrested, died, to let you know you have won a wonderful prize, etc. In each case, you are told to call the 809 number right away. Since there are so many new area codes these days, people unknowingly return these calls.

If you call from the US, you will apparently be charged \$2,425 per-minute. Or, you'll get a long recorded message. The point is, they will try to keep you on the phone as long as possible to increase the charges. Unfortunately, when you get your phone bill, you'll often be charged more than \$24,100.00.

**WHY IT WORKS:**

The 809 area code is located in the British Virgin Islands (The Bahamas). The 809 area code can be used as a "pay-per-call" number, similar to 900 numbers in the US. Since 809 is not in the US, it is not covered by US regulations of 900 numbers, which require that you be notified and warned of charges and rates involved when you call a "pay-per-call" number. The 284 and 876 area codes are also located in the Caribbean.

There is also no requirement that the company provide a time period during which you may terminate the call without being charged. Further, where as many US homes that have 900 number blocking to avoid these kinds of charges, do not work in preventing calls to the 809, 284, and 876 area codes.

We recommend that no matter how you get the message, if you are asked to call a number with 809, 284, or 876 area codes that you don't recognize just disregard the message. Be wary of email or calls asking you to call an 809 area code number. It's important to prevent becoming a victim of this scam, since trying to fight the charges afterwards can become a real nightmare.

That's because you did actually make the call. If you complain, both your local phone company and your long distance carrier will not want to get involved and will most likely tell you that they are simply providing the billing for the foreign company. You'll end up dealing with a foreign company that argues they have done nothing wrong.