

**NUISANCE CALLS AND MESSAGES:**

# Abandoned and silent calls



**The phone rings, you rush to answer but there's no-one on the line.**

Abandoned and silent calls can be annoying and irritating at the best of times.

But for some people – for example, those living alone – these calls can be particularly frightening.

This guide explains more about these calls, what can cause them and what you can do about them.

## What are abandoned and silent calls?

An abandoned call is one that is terminated when you pick up the receiver. Instead of a person on the other end of the line you hear an information message from the organisation that is trying to call you.

A silent call is where you receive a call but you can hear nothing and have no means of knowing whether anyone is at the other end of the line.

## What causes them?

Most abandoned and silent calls are not necessarily made deliberately but can be caused by the use of technology by organisations to maximise the amount of time their calling agents spend speaking to consumers.

The majority of abandoned calls are caused by automated calling systems known as diallers.

These diallers, mainly used in call centres, dial telephone numbers automatically and connect people to call centre agents as soon as the phone is answered.

But diallers may not always work as intended. For example, if the dialler makes a call but there is no call centre agent on hand to deal with it, you might receive an abandoned call.

Silent calls can occur, for example, when the technology used by call centres to detect answer-machines mistakes you answering for an answering machine, and cuts off the call without playing an information message, or you hearing anything.

# Nuisance calls and messages:

## What is the law in this area?

Ofcom tackles abandoned and silent calls and has published a policy statement for industry aimed at reducing the harm caused by these calls.

Where someone is repeatedly making abandoned and/or silent calls, Ofcom may take enforcement action, including fining the caller up to £2 million.

Ofcom continually monitors complaints about abandoned and silent calls and can launch an investigation if it believes a caller is not following the law.

## I'm receiving silent/abandoned calls – what can I do?

If you are receiving abandoned or silent calls we recommend taking the following action:

Try and identify the caller: All companies using automated diallers should present a Calling Line Identification number on your telephone's display, and allow you to obtain the caller's telephone number by dialling 1471.

Alternatively, the automated message from an abandoned call should disclose the name of the organisation and provide a number that you can call to opt-out of receiving further calls.

## Complain to Ofcom:

You can complain by:

- ringing our Consumer Contact Team on 0300 123 3333
- going **online**: <https://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/tell-us/webflow/silent-calls/>
- or by post: Ofcom, Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London, SE1 9HA

You should try to provide as much information as you can about the abandoned or silent call, including:

- the name and number of the caller;
- how many times you have been called by the same number; and
- over what period of time have you been receiving the calls.

If you are unable to identify the caller you should contact your phone company. Most phone companies have a nuisance calls team, who can give you advice on what to do next.

## Why complain?

Your complaint can provide real benefits, both for you as an individual and for consumers generally.

This is because complaints play a vital role in helping regulators tackle the companies responsible for nuisance calls and messages.

Without your complaints regulators would find it much harder to identify and take action against those responsible.

Although complaining may not put a complete or immediate stop to all your nuisance calls or messages, it does help regulators take more targeted action in this area.

Making a complaint is simple. You can do it online, by phone or by post, and it can take as little as 5 minutes.