

*Protecting Wisconsin Consumers for 75 Years*

## Unwanted junk: Mail, calls, emails, texts, faxes

Do you feel overwhelmed by the flood of junk mail and telemarketing calls you receive? Experts estimate that Americans receive almost two million tons of junk mail every year, with the average person spending eight full months of his or her life just opening it. Telemarketing calls are time-consuming and irritating.

How do companies even get your name? It is probably part of a national advertising list used by direct marketers. Direct marketers sell their goods and services directly to consumers by using mail, catalogs, and telemarketing. The advertising lists are compiled from many sources and then sold to the direct marketers to use in marketing campaigns.

You may not be able to completely stop the flow of telephone, fax, mail, or email solicitations, but you can reduce it. You can avoid getting on some marketing lists in the first place. And you can take steps to get off many of the lists you are already on.

### **Stay off marketing lists**

**Do not fill out consumer surveys or marketing surveys.**

**Do not fill out surveys attached to product “warranty registration cards.”** You do not have to complete and return the cards to enjoy your warranty rights. Just keep a copy of the sales receipt.

**Do not fill out sweepstakes entry forms.**

When you give money to a charity or other group, **enclose a note asking them not to share, sell or rent your name to any other organization.** Do the same when you order from a catalog.

**Exercise your opt-out rights wherever you can.** Your financial institutions are required to notify you of your right to stop them from sharing your personal financial information with outside companies. Read the privacy policies of Websites. They often give you an opportunity to opt out of receiving email ads or of having your information shared with other companies. Be wary, often these websites pre-check the option box to indicate that you **do** want to receive marketing emails from the seller or their affiliates. Make sure you uncheck this box to opt out.

### **Telemarketing calls**

**Sign up for the Wisconsin Do Not Call Registry.** The Do Not Call Registry now includes unsolicited text messages as well. Most telemarketers should not call or text your number once it has been on the registry for 31 days. If one does, you can file a complaint with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. You can sign up for the Wisconsin No Call Registry by calling 1-888-382-1222 or online at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov). Once you have registered, your number remains on the registry until it is disconnected or reassigned.

**Do not answer the phone.** If you have caller ID and do not recognize the number appearing on the caller ID, the call is most likely from a telemarketer or scammer. Even if the caller ID does show a known name or number, be careful. Scammers use technology to change the number they are calling from so what appears on the caller ID might be false. This is called ‘spoofing’. If you do answer your phone and it is a telemarketer, simply hang up. Talking to telemarketers or scammers can

increase the number of these types of calls made to your phone.

### **Get an unlisted and unpublished phone number.**

Unlisted numbers usually get fewer unwanted calls. Or call your telephone company's business office and ask to have your name removed from its street address directories. Companies typically charge a monthly fee for these services.

### **Watch out for do-not-call**

**scams.** They may try to steal personal information by posing as a state or federal do-not-call program.

## **Junk mail**

**Sexually oriented** – The United States Postal Service maintains a list of persons who have informed them that they do not wish to receive sexually oriented advertisements in their mail. To avoid getting sexually oriented mail, fill out Prohibitory Form 1500 at your local post office or on their website at [usps.com](http://usps.com). The form **must** be filled out by the person to whom the mail is addressed or if for a child, the legal guardian. If you have received unwanted sexually oriented advertisements, you must include the opened envelope and original contents of the sexually oriented mail.

**Direct mailings** – to reduce other types of mail, write directly to the companies that are sending you the junk mail and tell them to stop. A sample letter is on the back.

## **Call 888-5OPTOUT**

(888-567-8688) to stop most unsolicited pre-approved credit offers. Or opt out online at [www.optoutprescreen.com](http://www.optoutprescreen.com). This is good for five years, or you can make it permanent.

**Mailing lists** – the Direct Marketing Association's (DMA) Mail Preference Service (MPS) lets you opt out of receiving unsolicited commercial mail from many national companies for five years. When you register with this service, your name will be put on a "delete" file and made available to direct-mail marketers and organizations. This will reduce most of your unsolicited mail. However, your registration will not stop mailings from organizations that do not use the DMA's Mail Preference Service. To register with DMA's Mail Preference Service, go to:

**[www.dmachoice.org](http://www.dmachoice.org)**

or write to:

**DMAchoice  
Direct Marketing Association  
PO Box 643  
Carmel, NY 10512**

A sample registration form is on the back of this fact sheet. Include \$1 for each completed form-make check or money order payable to DMA. Please do not send cash.

## **Junk faxes**

Federal law bans sending unsolicited advertisements to a fax machine without first getting the consent of the receiver, unless the sender has an established business relationship with the recipient. It also requires senders of fax advertisements to

include a conspicuous notice with contact information and instructions on how to opt out of future marketing faxes.

## **Junk e-mail (Spam)**

Never respond to spam or click on any links within the email. Never buy anything advertised in spam. Protect your email address as you would other personal information. Do not post your email address on your Web site. Use a separate email address for newsgroups.

Sign up with the Direct Marketing Association's e-mail Preference Service at [www.dmachoice.org](http://www.dmachoice.org). This is a free, voluntary industry program that will stop most but not all junk email.

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

**Bureau of Consumer Protection  
2811 Agriculture Drive  
PO Box 8911  
Madison WI 53708-8911**

**E-MAIL:**

**[DATCPHotline@wi.gov](mailto:DATCPHotline@wi.gov)**

**WEBSITE:**

**[datcp.wi.gov](http://datcp.wi.gov)**

**Toll-free in WI:**

**(800) 422-7128**

**(608) 224-4976**

**FAX: (608) 224-4677**

**TTY: (608) 224-5058**

The following is a simple form to use when contacting companies directly, or when mailing to the Direct Marketing Association. These efforts may not eliminate all your unwanted mail, but it should be significantly reduced. Be sure to list **all** variations of your name that appear on junk mail labels.

Attention: *XYZ Company*

I no longer want junk mail sent to my address or unauthorized telephone calls. I hereby request that the following name(s) be removed from any mailing and/or telephone lists immediately:

Name(s): *Connie Consumer*                      Address: *123 W Anytown Avenue*  
*Conny Consumer*                                      *Any Town, WI 12345*  
*C M Consumer*                                      Email Address: *Connie.Consumer@---.com*

Do not sell, rent, lease or otherwise share this information. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely, *Connie Consumer*                                      Date Sent: *June 15, 2015*



Attention:

I no longer want junk mail sent to my address or unauthorized telephone calls. I hereby request that the following name(s) be removed from any mailing and/or telephone lists immediately:

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Do not sell, rent, lease or otherwise share this information. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_ Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Your Signature)



Attention:

I no longer want junk mail sent to my address or unauthorized telephone calls. I hereby request that the following name(s) be removed from any mailing and/or telephone lists immediately:

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Do not sell, rent, lease or otherwise share this information. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_ Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Your Signature)