

their visit to the website. Whilst many of these 'dialers' are perfectly legitimate (most legitimate software downloads will advise the user that they are accessing a PRS before they agree to download the software), some do not.

Known as 'rogue dialers', the fraudulent dialers automatically connect the user's computer to a PRS - to which it remains connected until such time as the user manually disconnects it and re-connects to their usual provider. Thus, every time the user connects to the internet he/ she is using a high-cost PRS connection.

Protection against PRS scams

- Treat an invitation to 'click' on links or 'pop-up' or accept a download with extreme caution - especially if such invitations appear unprompted
- Install firewalls, anti-virus protection and anti 'pop-up' software - and update them regularly
- Check the dial-up setting on your computer regularly to ensure that you are connected to your chosen ISP
- Do not allow children to open e-mails (especially those with attachments) from unknown sources
- Whilst 'spam fliers' designed to recognize incoming 'junk mail' and directing it to the 'junk mail' box can be installed - such filters are also capable of misdirection of mail. Users of such filters are advised to check their 'junk mail' box regularly
- Before downloading PRS content ALWAYS read the terms and conditions
- Consider requesting your Service Provider to bar your equipment from dialing PRS numbers. And, to protect yourself against 'rogue-dialers' dialing international PRS at your expense, request that international numbers only be accessed via the use of your own PIN number
- Users of broadband Internet access are advised to ensure that their dial up modems are properly disconnected from either the phone-socket or the computer

How to react to PRS scam

Contact your Service Provider immediately. In the event that you feel your complaint has not been properly handled, contact CA (See details below).

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Premium Rate Services (PRS)



This brochure has been developed as part of the **Consumer and Education Programme** of the **Communication Authority of Kenya**. It was compiled as a result of a review of material from various sources and presents the current perception of the information available on Premium Rate Services (PRS) with particular relevance to their use in Kenya.

Introduction

Premium Rate Services (PRS) offer either information or entertainment and are charged at a premium (higher than conventional) cost. PRS are typically accessed via the SMS (Short Messaging Service) on a variety of media that include; landline telephone, fax, internet, mobile-phone or TV. PRS offer access to such services as:

Entertainment: competitions, phone-chat services, horoscope, interactive TV games, charitable fund-raising, TV voting (e.g. as used for Tusker Project Fame, Big Brother), ring-tone and logo downloads.

Information: Directory Equity Service, technical help-lines (for such things as IT problems), adult entertainment, weather or traffic updates, sports or global news.

PRS numbers

PRS numbers provide a means by which Premium Rate Services may be accessed. They are typically prefixed by **0900** or **091** on fixed line networks. When accessed by mobile-phone, they are usually prefixed by a three-, four-, or five-, digit number, followed by a descriptive word.

Toll-free numbers

Toll-free numbers allow callers to make FREE calls. Toll-free numbers are typically used by organizations that wish to make it easy for users to contact them (such as charitable organizations, 'help lines', or companies that wish to attract business) and, therefore, pay for the call themselves. Typically toll-free numbers begin with **800** or **888**. However, there are a few exemptions, such as 116, which provides free access to the Child Helpline Service (concerned parties or children are invited to call this number if they believe a child's rights are being violated).

How the PRS works

PRS are usually offered to the user by their Service Provider, which is responsible for their content. Usually, the telephone company (or the ISP Company) will handle the call on behalf of the Service Provider, and the revenue from the call will be shared between them and the organization responsible for providing the service.

Regulation of the PRS

PRS are regulated by the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA). For an organisation to provide premium rate services in Kenya, they are required to obtain a Content Service Provider (CSP) licence from CA or alternatively provide those services through a licence CSP service provider based on an authorisation from CA.

PRS Scams (fraudulent SMSs)

A number of 'scams' can be perpetrated using the PRS. The prime scam relates to the reverse-change SMS which, when activated by the use of a specific number, means that the user agrees to be charged for all incoming SMS numbers from that number. To activate the reverse-change SMS, the user must send a pre-specified message to a specific number. Termed 'short codes', these are usually 3, 4, or 5-digit numbers (accessed from a specific network).

How the reverse-change SMS scam works

When a reverse-change SMS scam is in operation, the user will receive an SMS message offering an inducement for them to call a certain number (to claim a prize, or receive news of a loved one). The number supplied will be a PRS number (Changed at a higher rate) and by calling it the user will automatically agree to pay for all incoming messages to their mobile-phone. Thereafter the operator of the scam can send unlimited messages-all charged at premium rate. Network operators are expected to shut down such fraudulent operations as soon as they realize they are in operation, but before that time many innocent users are swindled. So, if you know of a scam in operation report it immediately.

How to safeguard yourself against scams

- Never reply to text-messages from unknown sources. Not only could you be exposing yourself to the threat of a scam, but also such messages can carry telephone viruses, or initiate contact with negatively intentioned persons.
- Should you be approached by someone asking to use your mobile-phone in an 'emergency' you are advised to direct them to a public phone. In case of a serious emergency, YOU should dial **999** or **122** on their behalf.
- Ask your service Provider for details on availability and procedures for PRS call-barring.

Internet 'Dialer' scams

If you are using a dial-up Internet connection to access a certain PRS, you may be asked to download a software known as a 'dialer'. If fraudulent configured/designed, it may temporarily disconnect the dial-up connection and connect the user to a PRS number for the duration of