

Telephony Fraud

Did you know that if your telephone system was hacked, it could cost you £1,000s?

'Phreakers' is the name given to phone hackers who target a business' telephone or PBX system, break the voicemail PIN code and configure it for their own use. With the help of access codes and online password cracking technology, the hijackers can infiltrate your telephone system.

Once they have full access, the Phreakers can make outbound calls to anywhere in the world, with the cost being billed to the owner of the phone line that has been hacked.

Phone Phreakers are organised criminal gangs. Typically they sell phone services in developing countries to customers who do not own their own phone line and they deal in cash, which is virtually untraceable.

What can you do to protect your phone system?

If the access on the outside line, via Voicemail, is absolutely necessary, then suitable restrictions need to be set up on any extension that must have this type of connection.

- Don't forget to update default passwords and security settings and change passwords regularly.
- Change voicemail passwords regularly and protect them and your access codes from unauthorised use.
- DISA (Direct Inward System Access), a feature to enable remote access of voicemail is no longer sold or recommended, but an old office exchange could have it, so ensure that this is disabled.
- Remove or de-activate any telephone system functionality you don't need, including remote access ports.
- Remove redundant mailboxes and set up a process to immediately deactivate access codes and voicemail passwords of people who leave your business.
- Never publish the remote access phone numbers that connect callers to your voicemail system.

In addition to protecting your Voicemail, there are a number of things you can do or implement.

- If your business has networked its telephone exchanges, be aware that dial-through-fraud hackers could potentially 'breakout' from one site to another via this route.
- Ensure interactive voice response (Press 1 for sales, 2 for support etc.) and auto attendant options for accessing outside lines, are removed.
- Restrict certain numbers, for example, bar calls to premium rate numbers, international numbers, operator numbers or Directory Enquiries.
- Keep an eye on your monthly phones bills for anything that looks unusual.
- Carry out regular audits of your telephone systems including privileges and restrictions and limit access to equipment, hardware and systems to required personnel.
- Implement policies and procedures to minimise risk.
- Programme your telephone system to disallow access after three individual attempts, in the same way as entering the wrong PIN at the cash machine.

Free tools

Protect yourself with a Fraud Monitor, Fraud Monitor Keeps a close eye on your account throughout the month and alerts you of any unusual activity when it happens.

Call logging, if not already in place, should be immediately set up on any system where fraud is suspected. But it will need to be professionally programmed or it may miss certain call types.

Paid tools

There is a firewall protection system for your PBX called Control Phreak. It can be configured to deny/allow any combination of numbers or facilities and is managed independently of the phone system, which means it cannot be accessed by hackers.

MF Telecom Services offers a customised toll fraud protection to best suit your business needs and requirements.

Activity is monitored 24/7 and any suspicious call activity detected instantly, resulting in either one of two automatic alerts: an 'alert only' email sent to designated recipients, or in more severe cases an 'alert and block' which prevents any further call activity until the system is reset. The emails provide information explaining why the call is suspicious. Once checked, if the call activity is legitimate, the restriction can be lifted and your business communications continue as normal.

Find out more

So many companies are unaware of or ignore the risk of toll fraud attacks, with devastating financial consequences. However, complete 24-hour protection can be setup with a simple low cost solution.

Find out more about how MF Telecom Services can provide 24/7 complete security against future toll fraud attacks – email us or call 01892 577577 and speak to one of our UK business consultants.