Robo-caller fined for 96 million phone calls

14th May, 2018

America's Federal Communications Commission, the FCC, has fined a man who they say placed nearly 100 million robocalls. A robocall is a telephone call that is made by a computer programme. The software can make thousands of calls at a time. The FCC fined the man a record $120 million because they say he posed a threat to public safety. The FCC says the man's calls were illegal because many of them were made to "critical emergency phone lines". The FCC said many other calls went to mobile phones and residential telephones without the person being called wanting that call. This means the call was a nuisance call - a bit like spam e-mail, which is also unwanted and annoying.

The FCC said the man committed a serious crime and carried out, "one of the largest and most dangerous illegal robocalling campaigns that the Commission has ever investigated". The man made 96 million robocalls during a three-month period in 2016 as a part of a "telemarketing scheme". He used a technique called "neighbor spoofing" to get people to answer the calls. This technique tricks people into thinking the calls are from a local telephone number. The man also tricked people into believing that the calls were from well-known airlines, hotels and travel companies. Callers were instead passed on to call centres that tried to sell them property. The man said he has done nothing wrong.

Sources: *cnn.com / usatoday.com / fortune.com*

Writing

Making nuisance calls should be made a crime. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

robocall / computer / programme / record / threat / public safety / residential / spam / serious crime / dangerous / campaign / period / technique / telephone number / hotel

True / False

a) America's Contraptions Commission fined a man for robocalls. T / F

b) The man was fined $120 million. T / F

c) A commission decided the man was a danger to the public. T / F

d) The article likened nuisance calls to spam mail. T / F

e) The commission said the robocalls were the most serious they had seen. T / F

f) The man made 96 million robocalls in just one month. T / F

g) The robocaller used a technique called neighbor spooking. T / F

h) The man has admitted that he is guilty. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

1.	**nearly**	a.	unwelcome
2.	**posed**	b.	irritating
3.	**critical**	c.	houses
4.	**unwanted**	d.	looked into
5.	**annoying**	e.	almost
6.	**committed**	f.	famous
7.	**investigated**	g.	carried out
8.	**tricked**	h.	presented
9.	**well-known**	i.	fooled
10.	**property**	j.	serious

Discussion – Student A

a) What do you think about what you read?

b) What would you do without a phone?

c) Do you prefer to call or text?

d) What do you think of telemarketing?

e) Has someone used technology to trick you?

f) What punishment would you give the man?

g) How can the man think he did nothing wrong?

h) What questions would you like to ask the FCC?

Phrase Match

1. software can make thousands of calls
2. he posed a threat to
3. residential
4. the call was a nuisance call - a bit
5. which is also unwanted
6. the man committed a
7. a telemarketing
8. This technique tricks
9. a local telephone
10. Callers were instead passed

a. on to call centres
b. serious crime
c. and annoying
d. scheme
e. at a time
f. telephones
g. number
h. like spam e-mail
i. people
j. public safety

Discussion – Student B

a) How important is the phone to you?
b) What do you think of one person making 96 million calls?
c) What do you think of nuisance calls?
d) What other phone nuisances are there?
e) What do you think of the $120 million fine?
f) Should cold calls be banned?
g) What do you do when a caller tries to sell you something?
h) How often do you make phone calls?

Spelling

1. adothsuns of calls
2. he posed a tather to public safety
3. the man's calls were alilegl
4. gerenemcy phone lines
5. ielridatens telephones
6. unwanted and gnnnoyai
7. the man committed a rssuoie crime
8. robocalling gasipmcna
9. a telemarketing cmeseh
10. This nceuietqh tricks people
11. Callers were itsndae passed on
12. sell them rtyporpe

Role Play

Role A – Cyber-bullying
You think cyber-bullying is the worst tech crime. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what should be done about their crimes. Also, tell the others which is the hardest of these to prevent of these (and why): malware, hacking or illegal downloading.

Role B – Malware
You think malware is the worst tech crime. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what should be done about their crimes. Also, tell the others which is the hardest of these to prevent of these (and why): cyber-bullying, hacking or illegal downloading.

Role C – Hacking
You think hacking is the worst tech crime. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what should be done about their crimes. Also, tell the others which is the hardest of these to prevent of these (and why): malware, cyber-bullying or illegal downloading.

Role D – Illegal Downloading
You think illegal downloading is the worst tech crime. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what should be done about their crimes. Also, tell the others which is the hardest of these to prevent of these (and why): malware, hacking or cyber-bullying.
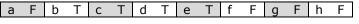
Speaking – Tech Crime

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- nuisance calls
- sexting
- malware
- hacking
- cyber-bullying
- identity theft
- phishing
- illegal downloading

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. j	4. a	5. b
6. g	7. d	8. i	9. f	10. c

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	F	h	F

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.