



Identification of Incoming Calls Originating from Outside Hong Kong by Calling Number Display

Telecommunications Users and Consumers Advisory Committee

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Telephone scams

- According to the information of the Police, there was a surge in telephone scams involving scammers deliberately changing / falsifying the caller ID by means of “caller ID spoofing” last year
- The Police indicated that those telephone scams originated from outside Hong Kong
- In July 2015, the Police discussed with the Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) to explore ways to tackle the problem

Using "+" Sign to Help Identify Calls from Outside Hong Kong

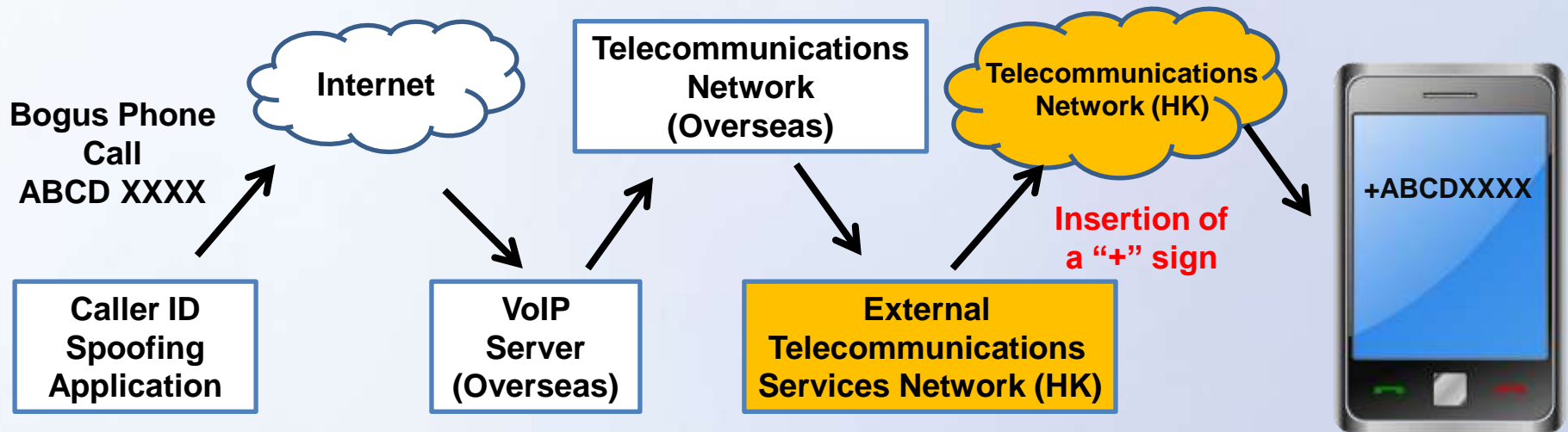
- After the discussion between the Police and OFCA, it was considered that the unified insertion of a "+" sign in the Calling Number Display ("CND") as a special prefix to help identify incoming calls from outside Hong Kong is one of the effective and feasible response measures
 - A "+" sign can provide a relatively simple and clear message to alert telecommunications users that the incoming calls may originate from outside Hong Kong
 - In general, the calling numbers of incoming calls from outside Hong Kong will only be shown on the CND of mobile phones
 - It is relatively simple to insert a "+" sign in the CND for incoming external calls in mobile network
 - The telecommunications industry can implement the arrangement of inserting a "+" sign in the CND of mobile phones in a relatively short period of time

It should be noted that whether or not the "+" sign is shown on the CND, members of the public should always stay vigilant in regard to suspicious phone calls

Implementation Arrangement for the Insertion of “+” Sign (1)

- In the past, as the practice of inserting a "+" sign before the calling number of an incoming call from outside Hong Kong varied from one telecommunications operator to another, OFCA unified the arrangement
- Implementation arrangement was divided into two phases:
 - **Phase One: Took effect on 21 August 2015**
Insertion of a “+” sign in the CND of mobile phone users for all incoming calls from outside Hong Kong other than roaming calls made by Hong Kong mobile phone users to Hong Kong from overseas
 - **Phase Two: Took effect by end of September 2015**
Insertion of a "+" sign in the CND of mobile phone users for all incoming calls from outside Hong Kong

Implementation Arrangement for the Insertion of “+” Sign (2)



Limitations about "+" Sign on CND

The display of the "+" sign on the CND of a mobile phone for an incoming external call may not work due to the following limitations:

- If the bogus calling number matches with a phone number stored in the directory of the called party's mobile phone, the phone may display the name corresponding to that phone number rather than the calling number with the "+" sign
- Certain very aged model phones which show digits only or some 4G smart phones with VoLTE enabled

Publicity and Consumer Education

- OFCA issued the related press release and consumer alert on 20 August 2015:
 - To inform the public of insertion of "+" sign in the CND of mobile phones with effect from 21 August 2015 to help identify possible telephone scams originated from outside Hong Kong
 - To remind the public of the measures against Caller ID Spoofing
- Attended media interview in regard to the arrangement

Effectiveness of the Arrangement after Implementation

- With the concerted efforts of the government departments concerned, telecommunications service providers and various industries, public awareness and alertness to telephone scams have been raised
- According to the information of the Police, there has been a declining trend in overall telephone scam cases lately
- OFCA will continue to communicate and collaborate with the Police and telecommunications operators so as to ensure the measures remain effective and are in the interest of the public

Thank you