

OFCA calls for participation in SMS Sender Registration Scheme by all sectors to help combat SMS scams

The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) today (April 25) announced the latest implementation status of the SMS Sender Registration Scheme (the Scheme), and encouraged more industries to actively participate in the Scheme.

The Scheme has been launched since the end of last year, and has been opened up to all industries for participation since February this year. To date, nearly 170 organisations have joined the Scheme (see Annex for details), including telecommunications service providers, banks and 31 government departments and statutory bodies which need to communicate with members of the public via SMS messages (including the Immigration Department, the Department of Health, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Customs and Excise Department, the Transport Department, the Consumer Council and the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority). The Director-General of Communications had previously sent letters to all other government departments and the Legislative Council Secretariat inviting their participation in the Scheme. OFCA has also allocated additional resources and manpower to process relevant applications.

According to the Scheme, only those companies or organisations being Registered Senders under the Scheme are able to send SMS messages to local subscribers of mobile services using their Registered SMS Sender IDs with the prefix "#". Any SMS messages with sender IDs containing "#" but not sent by Registered Senders will be blocked by the telecommunications networks.

"Under the Scheme, members of the public can easily identify whether an SMS message is from a Registered Sender by looking for the prefix '#' in the SMS Sender ID, thereby reducing the risk of SMS fraud. We are encouraged by the widespread support for the Scheme, and call for more companies or organisations to join the Scheme and become Registered Senders, with a view to enhancing the security and credibility of SMS messages and providing better protection to members of the public," a spokesman for OFCA said.

"We will continue to review the various measures from the telecommunications perspectives to curb telephone and SMS scams by interception at source, including blocking or suspending services of telephone numbers and websites suspected of committing fraud based on fraud records provided by Police, fully implementing the real-name registration programme for SIM cards, sending voice or text alerts to users for calls originating from places outside Hong Kong prefixed with '+852', so as to combat fraudulent calls and messages in a comprehensive manner," the spokesman added.

For details of the Scheme, please visit the dedicated webpage (www.ofca.gov.hk/en/consumer_focus/guide/hot_topics/ssrs/) or call OFCA's hotline (2961 6333).