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PRESS RELEASE

Report your lost or stolen mobile phone IMMEDIATELY

With the summer season kicking in, more people will be out making the most of the warmer weather. Whether at the beach, socialising or taking time off work to go abroad on annual holidays, people generally become more outgoing during the summer period. This time of year is perfect for opportunist thieves waiting to prey on consumers particularly vulnerable to mobile phone theft, as distracted holidaymakers, beachgoers or partygoers are easy targets.

Not only are many mobile handsets worth hundreds of pounds and costly to replace, thieves can very quickly run up high bills on stolen phones.

In some instances, charges from unauthorised use of lost and stolen phones can present consumers with unexpected bills of hundreds or even thousands of pounds.

Reducing the chances of 'bill shock' when a phone goes missing

Waiting to see if the phone turns up and failing to report it quickly can be a costly mistake.

Currently, consumers are liable for all charges incurred up until the point they report the phone as lost or stolen to their mobile service provider.

The GRA is concerned about the unlimited liability that consumers face for unauthorised use of a lost or stolen phone up to the point that the phone is reported. It has a clear message for consumers – if you think that your mobile phone is lost or has been stolen, do not wait to see if it turns up – report it to your service provider immediately.

Once satisfied that the mobile phone belongs to the person making the report, service providers can put a block on the account to stop incurring charges. The person reporting may be asked to go through a simple security step which may involve questions like identifying mobile numbers which have recently been called from the missing mobile phone. This is usually easily reversible if the phone is later found.

It is recommended that in order to safely identify a particular mobile phone, users are encouraged to retain their handsets IMEI number, a 15-digit serial number unique to each handset particularly useful when retrieving the mobile phone if it is ever recovered.

Consumers with mobile phone insurance may also be obliged to let their insurer know if their phone is lost or stolen within a certain time frame too.

Top tips on mobile phone security

Below are a number of top mobile phone security tips which could serve to protect you in the event that your mobile phone is stolen.

Top tips include:

- Treat your phone as carefully as you would your bank or credit cards. Make sure that you always take care when using your phone in public, and don't let it out of your possession;
- Put a passcode on both your handset and SIM to make it more difficult for thieves to use;
- Make a record of your phone's IMEI number, as well as the make and model number. The IMEI is a unique 15-digit serial number which you will need to get the handset blocked. You can get your IMEI number by keying *#06# into your handset or by looking behind your phone battery;
- Consider barring calls to international and premium rate numbers (numbers which offer services you are charged for through your monthly phone bill or through credit on your mobile phone) to limit the risk of large bills being run up on your phone by thieves;
- Check the terms and conditions if you have an existing mobile phone insurance policy, or when considering a new policy as some insurers may provide cover for unauthorised use; and
- Consider using apps which can trace your phone if it is lost/stolen and can wipe details from it remotely.