



## New UK rules for telephone directory information

The Office of Telecommunications (OFTEL), the UK telecoms watchdog, is preparing rules for the use of directory information. A set of draft rules, developed by OFTEL together with the Data Protection Registrar, aims to give more choice of directory services while safeguarding the privacy of individuals' telephone numbers.

Currently, 37% of phone line owners have chosen to be ex-directory to avoid nuisance calls, including telemarketing. By introducing stricter rules on the use of customer information, OFTEL hopes to reduce the number of ex-directory listings. The proposals have been put together in a public consultation document published in September. The main focus is on residential directory information.

### Residential directory information for limited purposes

OFTEL proposes that residential directory information should be used only for the creation of databases for the following purposes:

- *Compiling and publishing printed telephone directories*, provided they are ordered alphabetically by name and cover a geographical area of a reasonable minimum size.
- *Compiling and publishing directories in machine readable media* such as CD-ROMs, provided they only permit numbers to be searched by the enquirer upon entering the customer's name and approximate address. These will need to be encrypted to prevent reverse searches, and have safeguards built in to prevent the contents being downloaded in bulk which would enable them to be used for other purposes.
- *Providing a voice directory enquiry service*, provided the search is only conducted on the basis of name and approximate address given by the enquirer.
- *Providing an on-line directory enquiry service*, which could include, for example, a directory enquiry service on the Internet, provided it

permits numbers to be searched only on the basis of name and approximate address entered by the enquirer and is encrypted to prevent reverse searches and bulk downloads.

- *Providing an electronic batch directory enquiry service* which would allow bulk directory enquiry services for the purposes of appending telephone numbers to clients' name and address lists. This should permit only searching by entering the customer's name and approximate address.

OFTEL does not propose any changes to the existing rules on the use of business directory information.

### Ex-directory options

As for ex-directory customers, OFTEL has two options:

1. either not to make this information available to anyone, or
2. to make the customers' names and addresses available, but not their phone numbers.

### Comments welcome

OFTEL held a *Directory Information Public Workshop* in London on 10th November where the programme included speakers from OFTEL, the Office of the Data Protection Registrar, the English Advisory Committee on Telecommunications, the Telecommunication Managers' Association, and telecommunications companies.

OFTEL welcomes comments on its proposals from all interested parties by the end of 1997. There is a further period until January 16th, 1998 when comments are invited on submissions to OFTEL. The submissions, without any confidential material, may be viewed at OFTEL's library. To make an appointment, telephone 0171 634 8762 or 0171 634 8765.

**OFTEL's documents are entitled:**  
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