



## COHASSET POLICE DEPARTMENT

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### **Annoying or Obscene Telephone Calls**

Annoying, harassing, hang-up, or obscene telephone calls are becoming more and more commonplace today even with advanced technology in communications, such as Caller ID with name, Call Trace \*57, Call Blocking \*67, Line Blocking \*82, Repeat Dialing \*66 and Return Dialing \*69. Today, we're able to trace a phone call back to the caller by pressing a couple of buttons on your telephone. This is an excellent tool for the homeowner and law enforcement to identify the caller.

These types of calls are evident in bad relationships, the breakup of a relationship, a disgruntled employee, unhappy customer, a neighbor and the like. The caller has a sole purpose to annoy or harass. There is a solution and these types of calls can be stopped.

In Massachusetts, MA General Law c. 269 s. 14A is the chapter and section that one can be charged under for annoying or obscene telephone calls. There are 3 elements to the law that must be met. The person repeatedly made telephone calls or caused telephone calls to be made (at least 3 calls), to the victim or the victim's family and the person's language was indecent or obscene, or the person's sole purpose was to harass or molest the victim or the victim's family.

Penalty: Misdemeanor.

### **Some Initial Steps to Take**

Call Trace is an effective way of combating annoying, threatening and harassing phone calls. The only calls you should trace are those which are considered life threatening or harassing to the point at which you are willing to press criminal charges. Using the switching power of the Verizon network, you can accomplish on your own what used to require complicated intervention. Call Trace will trace a bothersome call, record your number and the number of the caller, and then forward the information to the Verizon Unlawful Call Center. You will not receive the telephone number of the person who called. This information will be retrieved and held by the Unlawful Call Center. This traced information will only be released to legally empowered authorities. You should make a note of the date and time of the call that you traced as a reference when you follow up with the Verizon Unlawful Call Center and the Cohasset Police Department.

### **Tracing Your Calls**

Verizon provides the following service that helps put an end to annoying and obscene phone calls by tracing the last incoming call. It provides essential information to authorities if an investigation is required. (There is a fee for tracing phone calls) When you want to trace a phone call;

1. Make sure the phone rings twice
2. Hang up then lift the receiver and listen for a dial tone.

3. Press \*57 or for rotary phone dial 1157
4. The Unlawful Call Center recommends that telephone customers who are attempting to activate the Call Trace feature contact them immediately to ensure the call was traced at 1 (800) 518-5507.
5. An announcement will tell you the call was traced & give you further instructions. The Unlawful Call Center will require a case number, from the Cohasset Police Department before the case can be opened.

Police Officer Taking Report \_\_\_\_\_

Case Number \_\_\_\_\_

### **How do I find out who is making the phone calls?**

The Cohasset Police Department will investigate annoying phone calls within Cohasset only. If you're getting these phone calls, it is requested that you call the Verizon Unlawful Call Center, (formerly the Unlawful Call Bureau) and open up a case. The Unlawful Call Center will provide you with further instructions. The Phone Company will not provide the police with any information until you have opened a case with them, unless it is an extreme emergency.

Next, contact the Cohasset Police Department and speak to a police officer advising that you would like to file a complaint regarding annoying phone calls. After providing the officer with your information, obtain the **POLICE CASE NUMBER**. You may need this case number for the Phone Company.

If you have successfully traced 3 or more phone calls you will be notified. When you're notified by the phone company, call the Cohasset Police and give the officer the case number provided to you by the UCC. An officer will contact the UCC and they will provide the officer with the information on all calls traced. The information provided would be the telephone number, the address where the call was placed from, and the person's name the phone number is listed to. The UCC will send the investigating police officer a report and the list of numbers traced.

The officer will contact you (victim/reporting party) and tell you the date and time of the call, the address where the call originates from and who the phone number belongs to. If, after hearing the person's name and address, further investigation is needed, the officer will assist you.

Many times, once a parent or the reporting party hears the name and address, they wish to handle the problem themselves without police involvement. And this may be a better solution depending on the situation. Once you close a case with the UCC and the calls persist, you must call them again to open up another case.