



INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

# ITU-T

TELECOMMUNICATION  
STANDARDIZATION SECTOR  
OF ITU

## E.124

**TELEPHONE NETWORK AND ISDN**

**OPERATION, NUMBERING, ROUTING  
AND MOBILE SERVICE**

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**DISCOURAGEMENT OF FRIVOLOUS  
INTERNATIONAL CALLING TO UNASSIGNED  
OR VACANT NUMBERS ANSWERED BY  
RECORDED ANNOUNCEMENTS WITHOUT  
CHARGE**

**ITU-T Recommendation E.124**

(Extract from the *Blue Book*)

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## NOTES

1 ITU-T Recommendation E.124 was published in Fascicle II.2 of the *Blue Book*. This file is an extract from the *Blue Book*. While the presentation and layout of the text might be slightly different from the *Blue Book* version, the contents of the file are identical to the *Blue Book* version and copyright conditions remain unchanged (see below).

2 In this Recommendation, the expression “Administration” is used for conciseness to indicate both a telecommunication administration and a recognized operating agency.

**DISCOURAGEMENT OF FRIVOLOUS INTERNATIONAL CALLING  
TO UNASSIGNED OR VACANT NUMBERS ANSWERED BY  
RECORDED ANNOUNCEMENTS WITHOUT CHARGE**

**1 Preamble**

It sometimes happens that there is a severe outbreak of international calling to telephone numbers that answer with recorded announcements without charge. It seems that some subscribers make such calls merely for free amusement. Frivolous calling can occur unnoticed by an Administration unless it is deliberately looked for, and serious degradation of quality of service can result.

This Recommendation concerns prevention and abatement of frivolous international calling.

**2 Monitoring**

Administrations should be alert to changes in the rate of call completion, or in the rate of calls completed without charge, or in any other direct or indirect measures that could indicate the growth of a significant amount of frivolous calling<sup>1)</sup>. Direct investigation may be necessary to confirm the existence of this problem.

**3 Prevention<sup>2)</sup>**

The following practices in one country may reduce the likelihood of becoming the destination for frivolous calls from another country:

- limiting the number of cycles of an announcement;
- disconnecting when the limit is reached;
- offering no lengthy information without charge.

**4 Abatement**

4.1 When frivolous calls can be identified as originating from the network of a particular Administration, the Administrations concerned should arrange bilaterally to implement the most appropriate prevention and abatement measures for the particular case. This bilateral arrangement may include measures not recommended for general application.

4.2 In general, vacant subscriber number announcements should not be replaced by non-standard tones to reduce frivolous calling because the use of unfamiliar tones might cause increased repeat attempts by serious callers. Where particular numbers have been identified as the targets of frivolous callers, replacing announcements by tones for a limited period should not degrade the service for serious callers. For this purpose only, a special information tone is recommended.

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<sup>1)</sup> The problem was first discovered in Japan after KDD noticed a large number of calls lasting longer than one minute without an answer signal being returned.

<sup>2)</sup> Where the signalling systems permit, the use of a backward unallocated-number signal will allow an appropriate tone or announcement to be returned to the caller according to Recommendation E. 181, § 2.

4.3 When frivolous calling has been identified as causing quality of service problems, it is desirable to detect the calls and direct them to an appropriate announcement as close to the calling subscriber as practicable. The administrative and technical difficulties of updating such arrangements for changes in many different numbering plans make the incoming international switching centre the practical limit in most cases. By bilateral agreement, however, frivolous calls might be blocked at the outgoing international switching centre instead.

4.4 In accordance with Recommendation E. 231, no charge should be made for calls to subscribers whose service has been suspended, cancelled or transferred. When calls to certain of these out-of-use numbers have been identified as predominantly frivolous, the provisions of Recommendation E. 231 may be temporarily ignored for only the particular numbers involved, until the problem is abated<sup>3)</sup>, and subject to the agreement of the Administrations concerned. Calls to these numbers would then have an answer signal returned and would be charged<sup>4)</sup>. Calls to unassigned numbers may be handled similarly. This measure would be immediately effective when frivolous calls originate from payphones.

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<sup>3)</sup> Administrations should take care not to apply this measure to non-frivolous telephone calls.

<sup>4)</sup> Some exchanges may require the addition of a function to handle such calls in this manner.