

**Please Think of Us
As Your Law Firm**

If you have a legal question or problem, please don't hesitate to call or e-mail.

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Hold the Phone: How One-Ring Phone Scams Target Their Victims

Don't recognize the number on your screen? The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) says you should "hold the phone." You could be a potential victim of the new and growing "one-ring phone scam."

These savvy scammers gain access to databases containing thousands of American cell phone numbers and use auto-dialers to call those digits. They allow the phone to ring just once, which is enough to cause a missed call message to pop up on the owner's screen. The scammers are hoping your curiosity gets the best of you and that you'll call back the intriguingly unrecognizable number.

Please Refer Us To Your Family and Friends

We want you to think of us as your law firm. If you have legal matters that need attention, please let us know. If we cannot handle the matter, we will refer you to a competent firm that can. Please feel free to refer us to your family,

When an individual does call back they hear a message to the effect of, "Hello, you've reached the operator. Please hold." While you wait patiently on "the operator," you are being charged with hefty per-minute charges on top of an international rate. The calls are from phone numbers with three-digit area codes that look like they're from inside the United States, but actually are associated with international phone numbers—often in the Caribbean. The area codes include: 268, 284, 473, 664, 649, 767, 809, 829, 849, and 876.

Thus, the FTC cautions Americans not to call back, if they happen to get a call

friends, and neighbors for their legal needs. We welcome the opportunity to help.

Call us. You're going to feel a whole lot better about things.

like this, as there is no danger in getting the call; the danger lies in calling the number back. In a day and age where Americans must feel constantly connected and loathe the feeling of a missed connection, steps must be taken to protect oneself from scammers who feed off of this mindset.

If you're tempted to call back, check online directories that will show you where the number is registered. In addition, if you become a victim of a "one-ring scam," you can also try to resolve your charges with your service provider. If that doesn't work, file a complaint with the FTC. It is important to *always* read your phone bill often, line by line. If you don't recognize a charge, call your carrier.

E-mail Address Please

To help us communicate with you more easily, please send your e-mail address to us at clavis@lavislaw.com. Thanks!

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Courtesy Newsletter

Effective Doctor-Patient Communications: Patient Empowerment

With the rapid advancement in technology in the healthcare industry, doctors are finding more and more ways to effectively treat their patients. This undoubtedly beneficial aspect of specialized care does have its downsides, however, and in turn, there are more challenges for patients than ever in today's medical environment. Patients face limited appointment time, impersonal communications, and sometimes even misdiagnoses. Due to these complications, effective communication with your physician is more important than ever.

Communication specialists note that good doctor-patient relations hinge on two important things: respect for each other and the ability to manage expectations. A patient who wishes to obtain the full value of the healthcare services he or she seeks will:

1) Be mindful of the doctor's limited time. The average doctor's appointment today is 16-20 minutes, which varies according to the doctor's

specialty. With that in mind, it is imperative to conduct personal research ahead of time, create a list of questions prior to the visit, and compose concise, accurate descriptions of symptoms.

2) Ask the meaning of words and concepts that are not understood. Doctors often use highly technical jargon that baffles lay patients. An explanation of diagnoses and a thorough understanding of future treatment are appropriate and important in effective care and patient compliance.

3) Ask his or her doctor what to expect next. Asking one's physician to explain how his or her care will develop benefits the patient both physically and mentally. Physically, the patient is able to follow prescription and treatment instructions properly, and mentally, the patient is not taken aback by any unforeseen symptoms, costs, or procedures.

4) Not be afraid to seek a second opinion or ask for alternative treatment. In most medical cases, there is more than one way to

treat the ailment. If the patient is uncomfortable with any prescriptions or procedures, he or she should remember that there are always other physicians or medical options. More importantly, the patient must realize that he or she is in control of his or her own well-being.

5) Know which questions to ask the doctor and which to save for others. Your doctor is the person who should answer your medical questions, but there are other questions, such as directions to a testing center or the time of your next appointment, that should be reserved for the doctor's staff. Reserving these questions for individuals other than your physician maximizes the time you have with your doctor during your appointment.

Patient empowerment is vital to a healthy relationship between doctor and patient. Being informed, prepared, and in control builds good rapport with your physician, which in turn incentivizes your doctor to give you the best care possible.



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"There is no comprehensive calculation for how much marshland was oiled by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, but estimates range from less than a square mile to a handful of square miles. Regardless, Louisiana loses roughly 25 square miles of marsh each year due to a host of environmental and manmade causes. The state is the site of one of the most ferocious rates of land loss in the world."

BP Oil Spill Continues to Harm Gulf-Coast Creatures

Four years ago BP's Deepwater Horizon platform dumped 4.9 million barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, and today, the Gulf Coast region is still rife with death and disease. The Journal of Environment Science & Technology reported that there is a high prevalence of "very sick animals." Specifically, Barataria Bay provides a shocking example of a very damaged ecosystem.

Researchers captured 32 dolphins from the bay, which is a 24-km stretch near southeastern Louisiana. Nearly half of those dolphins tested were determined to be either critically ill or dying. Some of the dolphins had missing

teeth, lung disease, liver disease, extreme pneumonia, and unbalanced hormone levels. One female dolphin was found to have been carrying a dead fetus.

BP insists that its hands are clean—the company has poured millions into rehabilitating the region's economy and environment.

In a company statement, BP said: "Symptoms observed in the study have been seen in other dolphin mortality events that have been related to contaminants and conditions found in the northern Gulf, such as polychlorinated biphenyls

(PCBs), DDT, and pesticides.

"Any increase in reported mortality observations after the spill may simply reflect an increase in the number of observers in the Gulf and an increased awareness among Gulf residents rather than an actual increase in dolphin deaths."

The statement portrays BP's efforts to downplay any causation between the oil spill and the animals' poor health. Researchers, however, are not convinced and continue to monitor the effects of the spill on marine life.

Proposed Federal Employee Minimum Wage Increase

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently released a report analyzing the minimum wage increase championed by President Obama. The CBO is said to have a huge influence on the fate of legislation in the United States. Its report details the possible effects the increase would have on incomes, employment, and the federal budget. The current minimum wage stands at \$7.25, but the increase would raise it to \$10.10 an hour for some federal employees. In addition, one of the budget proposals related to the increase would tie the \$10.10 an hour to the Consumer Price Index

(CPI), so that it would increase over time with inflation.

The CBO noted that the increase in minimum wage would lift 900,000 families out of poverty and increase the income of 16.5 million low-wage workers, but that it might also reduce total employment by 500,000 workers by 2016.

These numbers provide instant fuel for both Democratic supporters and skeptical Republicans. Democrats contend that the increase would lift many out of poverty, and Republicans believe that it's a job killer. Economists say that both may be right.

New Orleans Victims May Have Been Involved in Vicious Nationwide Game of "Knockout"

New Orleans police officers are looking for attackers who twice used baseball bats to assault their victims. In both cases, the cyclists traveling down Esplanade Avenue were hit on the head. One victim suffered a fractured skull.

The first incident occurred on Friday, February 14th at 2:20am when the victim was traveling down Esplanade near North Robertson. A male, believed to be about 16 - 18 years of age jumped out in front of the cyclist's path, slowing him to avoid a collision. Another male about the same age approached the cyclist from the street with an aluminum bat, hitting the victim in the mouth shortly thereafter. The two assailants fled, and the victim was taken to the hospital with a fractured jaw and injuries to his teeth. After responding to that call, the police learned of a second identical incident in the 1200 block of Esplanade, wherein the victim's skull was fractured.

While these incidents may be isolated cases of violence, some speculate that they are part of a larger national trend of a vicious game called "knockout." Police in New

York, Washington D.C., and Jersey City are investigating similar incidents where pedestrians are attacked with the aim of causing a loss of consciousness. Authorities and psychologists say the game has been around for decades or longer, and it mostly involves teenage boys who are looking to impress their friends.

"It's hard to excuse this behavior, there's no purpose to this," said Jeffrey Butts, a psychologist specializing in juvenile delinquency at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. "When someone runs into a store and demands money, you can sort of understand why they're doing it, desperation, whatever. But just hitting someone for the sheer thrill of seeing if you can knock someone out is just childish."

At least two deaths this year have been related to the "game," and police have seen a spike in similar attacks across the nation. The assault can range from a "sucker-punch" and slaps to more violent assaults, such as the baseball bat attacks seen here in New Orleans. Some attackers, on the other hand, choose to verbally harass their victims. Victims vary by

age, race, and sex, although hate crimes task forces in Brooklyn are investigating the targeting of Orthodox Jews.

In other incidents, a 78-year-old New York woman became the unknowing target of "knockout." In New Jersey, a 46-year-old man died after he was sucker-punched and struck his head on an iron fence. In addition, a New York State Representative was hit over the head after walking home from dinner in Washington DC. The status of the Congresswoman's health is currently unknown. One victim, Phoebe Connolly, of Brattleboro, Vermont, said she was randomly punched in the face by a teenager while riding her bike during a work-related visit to Washington. Connolly, who is 32 and works with teenagers in her job, said the blow knocked her head to the side and bloodied her nose.

While the recent media blitz about the game is drawing unnecessary attention to "knockout," experts say there are measures you can take to avoid becoming a victim: never travel alone and avoid being on the streets late at night.



"Knockout is a game where teenage boys target unsuspecting victims on the streets, attacking them in the hopes of causing serious injury and a loss of consciousness."

Meet Charles E. Lavis, Jr.

Charles Lavis is the founder and managing shareholder of Lavis Law Firm, APLC. He was born in New Orleans in 1965 and has practiced law there since 1995. Charles represents workers, consumers, homeowners and business owners against insurance companies and corporations. He represents clients in matters involving Job Injuries, Accidents, Products Liability, Hurricane Insurance Claims, Personal Injury, Wrongful Death and Survival Actions, and Insurance Bad Faith. If you have questions, please call Charles at **1-866-558-9151**.

