



## **Medical Alert Device Robocalls Scammed \$13 Million From Elderly**

*By Ashlee Kieler January 13, 2014*

Unwanted robocalls are bad enough. But there's a special place (not a good place, either) for companies that use robocalls to scam the elderly out of their savings. One Orlando-based operation, accused of scamming \$13 million from senior citizens, now has a confirmed reservation in that special place.

A U.S. District Court temporarily put a stop to and froze the assets of a company targeting senior citizen with a medical alert device scam, the Federal Trade Commission announced Monday. The court decision to stop the company, which operated under several names including Worldwide Info Services, Absolute Solutions Group Inc., and Global Service Providers, Inc, was granted following a request by the FTC and the Florida Attorney General's office.

The operation allegedly used robocalls to pitch "free" medical alert devices to seniors by falsely saying it was purchased for them by a relative or friend. Consumers, many of whom lived on fixed or limited income, were told the devices were endorsed by health organizations.

"These telemarketers used illegal robocalls to make a sales pitch that was 100 percent false," said Jessica Rich, Director of the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Consumer Protection. "They lied about the product, about whether health organizations had endorsed it, and about its cost. And all the while, their M.O. was to take advantage of older people's concerns about their health. We're so glad to work with our partners in Florida to stop this fraud."

The FTC complaint charges the company with violation of the FTC Act, the Commission's Telemarketing Sales Rule and Florida's Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act.

The FTC and Florida Attorney General are seeking a court order to permanently ban the operation from defrauding others and to provide restitution for victimized consumers. A preliminary injunction hearing in the case is set for Jan. 16.



This isn't the first instance of seniors being targeted with medical alert device scams.

In June 2013, the FTC scolded a Brooklyn-based company for using deception and threats to trick the elderly into paying for unordered medical alert systems. Around the same time, the Better Business Bureau warned seniors of deceptive telemarketing calls offering free medical alert devices.

Remember, the best way to avoid similar scams is to never press any buttons when you receive a robocall but end the call immediately.