

# Implementation of the SMS Sender Registration Scheme and Other Measures to Combat Fraudulent SMS

Telecommunications Regulatory Affairs Advisory Committee

31 July 2024

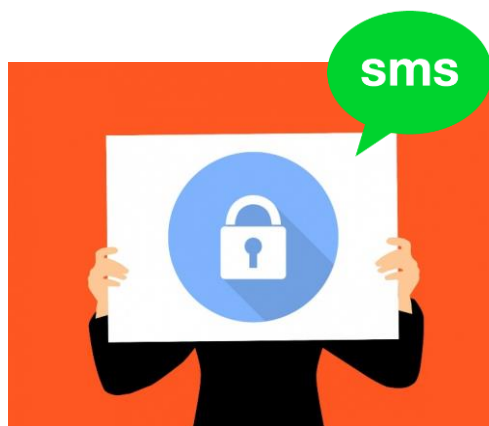
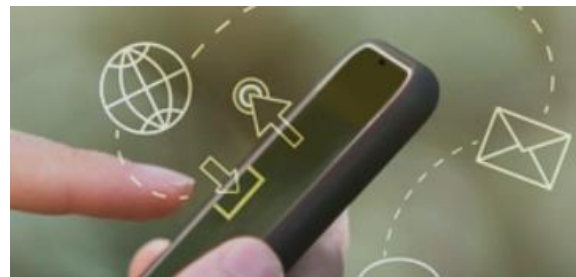


# Implementation of the SMS Sender Registration Scheme (“Scheme”)



# Background on Implementation of the Scheme

- **The Problem** : Fraudulent SMS sent to mobile users by fraudsters masquerading as publicly known companies/organisations



- **The Measure** :
  - Launch of the Scheme to help members of the public easily identify the authenticity of the SMS senders so as to reduce the risk of deception by fraudulent SMS

# Overview of the Scheme

- Newly introduced prefix “ # ”
  - ➔ Identify “Registered SMS Sender IDs”
  - ➔ Identify whether an SMS is sent by a Registered Sender easily

Look for a “#” sign for Registered Senders!

- Only Registered Senders are able to send SMS to local subscribers of mobile services using their Registered SMS Sender IDs with prefix “#”



sms



- All other SMS with sender IDs containing “#” but not sent by Registered Senders will be blocked by the telecom networks
- The Scheme is not applicable to 2-way SMS

# Registration of “SMS Sender IDs”

- Participating company/organisation needs to register with OFCA
  - as a “Registered Sender”
  - for SMS Sender ID(s) with prefix “#”

- “#” is positioned at
  - ✓ Beginning of SMS Sender ID (e.g. #OFCA)
  - ✗ Position other than in the prefix (e.g. OFCA#, OF#CA)
  - ✗ Beginning of SMS content



- Length of “Registered SMS Sender ID” after the prefix “#” – 3 to 10 alphabets, numbers or special characters (excluding “#”)

# Receipt of SMS from “Registered Senders”

- Members of the public receiving SMS messages in HK

➔ Can easily identify whether the SMS Sender ID is registered with OFCA and from a “Registered Sender” by looking at the prefix “#” in the “SMS Sender ID”

- Feature is provided by mobile service providers free of charge

- Prior application
- Installation of mobile apps
- Change of handset settings





# Launch of the Scheme and Latest Development

12/2023

- The Scheme was first launched in **the telecommunications sector** on **28 December 2023**

1/2024

- **Individual Government departments and the banking sector** also joined the Scheme in **January 2024**

2/2024

- The Scheme has been opened up to all sectors for participation since **21 February 2024**

7/2024

- As at **19 July 2024**, **more than 280** companies / organisations had joined the Scheme
- OFCA will continue to actively invite and facilitate more **Government bureaux / departments**, and **other companies / organisations** which need to communicate with members of the public via SMS to participate in the Scheme



The infographic features the Communications Authority logo at the top left. A large blue hashtag symbol is prominently displayed in the center. To its right, the text reads 'Look for a Hashtag "#" for Registered Senders!'. Below the hashtag, a section titled 'SMS Sender Registration Scheme has been launched' explains the purpose: to help the public verify SMS sender identities. It notes that participants use 'Registered SMS Sender IDs' with a '#' prefix. A list on a smartphone screen shows examples like '#Bank A' and '#Telecom X'. A QR code and the website 'ofca.gov.hk/ssrs' are provided for more details. The background is light blue with a stylized cityscape at the bottom.

通訊事務管理局  
COMMUNICATIONS  
AUTHORITY

Look for a Hashtag “#” for Registered Senders!

**SMS Sender Registration Scheme has been launched**

In order to help members of the public verify the identities of SMS senders, all companies or organisations participating in the SMS Sender Registration Scheme (“Scheme”) have started using “Registered SMS Sender IDs” with prefix “#” to send SMS\* to local subscribers of mobile services in Hong Kong\*.

Major banks, telecommunications service providers and some government departments have joined the Scheme. Other organisations will follow progressively.

Details of SMS Sender Registration Scheme:  
[ofca.gov.hk/ssrs](https://ofca.gov.hk/ssrs)

# Examples of “Registered Senders” (1/2)

Sector	Registered Senders
Banking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited</li><li>○ The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited</li><li>○ Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Limited</li></ul>
Telecommunications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ China Mobile Hong Kong Company Limited</li><li>○ CSL Mobile Limited</li><li>○ Hong Kong Broadband Network Limited</li><li>○ Hong Kong Telecommunications (HKT) Limited</li><li>○ Hutchison Telephone Company Limited</li><li>○ SmarTone Mobile Communications Limited</li></ul>





# Examples of “Registered Senders” (2/2)

Sector	Registered Senders
Government bureaux / departments, statutory bodies or other related organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hong Kong Police Force</li> <li>○ Immigration Department</li> <li>○ Department of Health</li> <li>○ Hongkong Post</li> <li>○ Office of the Communications Authority</li> <li>○ Consumer Council</li> <li>○ Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority</li> </ul>
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CLP Power Hong Kong Limited</li> <li>○ Prudential Hong Kong Limited</li> <li>○ The Dairy Farm Company, Limited (Mannings)</li> <li>○ S.F. Express (Hong Kong) Limited</li> <li>○ Sogo Hong Kong Company Limited</li> </ul>



# Checking of “Registered Senders” and their corresponding “Registered SMS Sender IDs”






- OFCA has established and maintained the SMS Sender Registry to keep the latest records of–
  - ▣ Registered Senders
  - ▣ Registered SMS Sender IDs with prefix “#”
- Members of the public can visit OFCA’s website  
<https://app2.ofca.gov.hk/apps/ssrs/onlineEnquiry>

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## Short Message Service (SMS) Sender Registration Scheme

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### Registration of SMS Sender IDs

- [SMS Sender Registry](#)  ←
- [List of Registered Senders](#)
  - ▣ [Banking sector](#) 
  - ▣ [Telecommunications sector](#) 
  - ▣ [Government bureaux / departments, statutory bodies or other related organisations](#) 
  - ▣ [Other sectors](#) 

# Other Measures to Combat Scam SMS Messages



# Code of Practice on Management of Scam Calls and Scam SMS by Telecommunications Service Providers

4/2023

- Issued on **21 April 2023** to provide practical guidance to mobile service providers in managing suspected scam calls made from local mobile networks and systems as well as ensuring the efficient and reliable operation of mobile networks and systems.

6/2023 &  
12/2023

- Came into operation on **30 June 2023**
- Revised on 27 September 2023 to cover fixed service providers starting from **31 December 2023**.

7/2024

- Further revised on 29 April 2024 to (a) cover management of suspected **scam SMS** and (b) enhance monitoring conditions for suspected scam calls. Telecommunications service providers shall implement the new measures by **31 July 2024**.
- From July 2023 to June 2024, about **930 000** local numbers were suspended under the COP.

# Blocking Phone Numbers and Websites referred by Police

9/2022

- With OFCA's coordination, Police and relevant telecommunications operators established a protocol
- Based on Police's information, telecommunications operators will:
  - ▢ block users' access to suspicious websites
  - ▢ suspend telecommunications services of local phone numbers suspected to be involved in scam cases
- As of **end June 2024**,
  - ▢ more than **4 200** local numbers were suspended
  - ▢ over **12 200** web addresses were blocked

6/2024



# Way Forward

- With a view to enhancing the protection to the public against fraudulent calls and SMS, OFCA will continue to –

- Raise public awareness of phone and SMS scams, and widely disseminate anti-deception messages to the public



- Review the various measures from the telecommunications perspectives to curb SMS scams by **interception at source**, in collaboration with the **Police**, the **telecommunications industry** as well as **other stakeholders**





# Thank You

