

# TRTA's Informative & Protective Services

Judy Hart, chair; Jose Lugo, Dr. Thalia Matherson,  
<trta.org> Dr. Amy Jo Baker, and Ron Gawryszewski



## SCAM ALERT: "Can You Hear Me Now?"

Alesha Hernandez, Consumer Education Specialist, with the FTC writes that a pre-recorded robot call that sounds like a real person is making the rounds with the opening question "Can you hear me now?" (1) Do not respond. Just hang up. Do not press 1 to speak to an operator. (2) Contact your phone provider to ask what services they provide to block unwanted phone calls. (3) Put your number on the "Do not call registry" at 1-888-382-1222. (4) File a complaint with the FTC at 1-877-382-4357.

Robot calls have made it cheap and easy for scammers to make illegal sales calls from anywhere in the world. It also helps them hide from the law by providing fake caller ID information.

Call blocking apps are available on mobile phones. You can create blacklists. Some apps give you prewritten messages to the caller, or they will file a complaint with the FTC. Many mobile phones already come with a built in feature to block callers. Some cloud-based services charge a fee; some are free.

You can purchase call-blocking devices for your home phone, but not all devices work on all phones. You may manually create and update your own blacklist, and you can create "do not disturb" hours.

Unfortunately, robot callers frequently change their numbers. ["Calls Asking "Can You Hear Me Now?" 3.21.2017, and "Blocking Unwanted Calls." 6.2016.]

**Worthy of Notation:** (1) It is not permitted for a funeral provider to charge a fee for handling a casket or urn a client bought somewhere else. A penalty may be as high as \$16,000. [Alvaro Puig. Federal Trade Commission. April 10, 2013.]



## Your Health Concerns Triclosan

In September, the FDA banned the antibacterial agent triclosan from hand soaps, but it remains in Colgate Total toothpaste because the company has proven that the benefits of the agent to prevent plaque and gingivitis outweighs the risks. [Catherine Saint Louis. "Why a Chemical Banned from Soap Is Still in Your Toothpaste." WELL. 9.7.16. <www.nytimes/2016/09/07/well/live>.]

## Fluorinated Wrappers for Fast Foods

Hamburger and sandwich wrappers, pastry bags, beverage cups and French fry containers are treated with perfluorinated chemicals (PFCs) and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs), which are linked to kidney and testicular cancers, thyroid disease, low birth weight, & immunotoxicity in children. These chemicals are not biodegradable. They migrate to the bloodstream in humans, but they are persistent in our environment because they do not degrade. [Science News. Univ. of Notre Dame. 2.1.2017. <www.sciencedaily.com>.]

## Haboob Lung Syndrome

Cover your face or stay indoors the next time dust is blowing. Healthy oxygen levels are between 90 and 100 percent. Haboob lung syndrome patients have oxygen saturation levels in the 70's and 80's. Their lungs are cloudy; they are short of breath & coughing. [Ellysa Gonzalez. A-J Media. Lubbock. Rpt. in Amarillo Globe-News. 4.3.2017. p. A-3.]

## More Important Information

**Income tax filing deadline:** Tuesday, April 18, 2017, at midnight.  
[ACOA.org/blog/2017-tax-guide-helping-seniors. . . >

**Winter Check:** Stash a duffel bag behind the front seat (in a trunk means you have to get out of the car on a busy or icy road) which is stocked with the following essentials: 1 blanket for each person, snow brush with ice scraper, hand and foot warmers (four for each person), tire inflation product such as Fix-a-Flat, De-icer, and paper towels.

Also, heat your metal key with a lighter for a few seconds; then push through the ice to unlock the frozen door keyhole. Don't use de-icer because it will damage the paint. For frosted interior windows, turn your car heater and defrost on high; then use a credit card to scrape away the frost. Have paper towels on hand to wipe away the scraped ice. If you anticipate chilly weather, split the seams on a trash bag and stretch it across your windshield, tucking each end into the car door to block your windshield and wipers from snow and ice. [Lauren Harris. "Good Life Guide." <communitytable.com>.

**UNFAIR PRACTICES:** The FTC brought charges against drug-maker ViroPharma Inc. for waging a campaign of serial, repetitive, and unsupported filings to delay the FDA's approval of generic Vancocin capsules, which are used to treat *C. difficile*—associated with diarrhea, a sometimes life-threatening bacterial infection.

**VIZIO** is paying \$2.2 million to settle charges it collected data (including viewers' sex, age, income, and other demographics information to sell to third parties for targeted advertising. Vizio installed software on its TVs to collect data on 11 million viewers. [Thomas Pahl, Acting Director of FTC, Bureau of Consumer Protection. "Penn Corner." 3.2017.]

**The Texas Senate** unanimously approved a two-year budget that would shift nearly \$2 billion in public education costs from the state to local taxpayers. The Senate's \$218 billion document now goes to budget writers in the House for debate. Senator Bob Hall, R-Edgewood commented on Sen. Jane Nelson (R-Flower Mound), the lead author of the budget's efforts: "I appreciate the strong attempt to do a reasonable budget with the money that we have, without getting into the Rainy Day fund or going into extreme accounting practices to make it work." ["Texas Senate OKs budget, shifts school costs to local taxpayers." *The Texas Tribune*. Rpt. in *Amarillo Globe-News*. 3.29.2017].

**Love Letter to Your Heirs:** Susan Turnbull, author of *The Wealth of Your Life: a Step-by-Step Guide for Creating Your Ethical Will*, provides advice on writing a love letter by setting down evidence of what was important to you. [My own uncle Ed Hart recorded his story on tapes that we cherish.] The writer will understand that the most valuable things to pass on are not material. This effort is not a commitment to an autobiography or memoir. Can you define what it means to lead an ethical life? This ethical will has no legal weight, but it is an instrument for realizing the broadest definition of "legacy." It may include (1) expressions of love and gratitude, (2) life experiences that reflect core values and lessons learned, (3) a preservation of family stories, (4) an explanation of decisions behind an estate plan or charitable bequest, (5) the story behind the money, and (6) a list of favorite books or movies. They are usually 20 pages.

It should exclude critical, negative, or controlling language. [Robert Powell, specialist for *USA TODAY*. "Be Sure Not to Die without Having Written a Love Letter to Your Heirs." Rpt. in *Amarillo Globe-News*. 3.5.17. p. C6.]



### Oral Health

Poor oral health includes broken and decayed teeth; puffy, infected gums; and absence of teeth. These issues lead to malnutrition, which leads to falls, and chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Infections migrate to the heart and lungs and can cause pneumonia. People with poor oral health are lonelier because they avoid smiling and being around other people. Loneliness has real physical and mental health implications. [Brennan, Leonord. "Healthy Smiles Make for Healthy Aging." *NCOA Blog*. 3.23.17. <ncoa.org/blog/healthy-smiles-healthy-aging].

### Cursive Writing

*It's back! Fourteen states are requiring cursive writing. New York City joined the group when a first-time voter showed up and printed his name for his signature since he never*