Mobile Phone Users At Risk in Recent Scam

Cellular service provider T-Mobile has warned its users of the industrywide scam in which criminals are stealing customers' phone numbers and using them to steal information.

How does this scam work?

It is called the port-out scam, and it starts when scammers, in one way or another, find out the victim's phone number. Then, the criminals pretend to be the phone number's owner and ask for the number to be transferred to another phone.

Once the thief has the phone number activated on the new phone, passwords can be changed, accounts can be accessed and money and information can be stolen.

How can you protect yourself?

T-Mobile sent out a text message alert to all of its customers with a link to a website with information about the scam and how to protect their phone numbers and personal information. It has implemented a port validation feature to give extra security to its users, who now can create a passcode to use when changing any of their information with T-Mobile's customer service department.

Regardless of service provider, all mobile phone users should make sure to always have strong passwords on any online or mobile account.

Customers also can consider checking with their banks to see if there are alternative account validation services available, other than text messaging.

What if you're a victim?

Alert your mobile service provider that your account has been compromised, and change all passwords on any other online accounts that could be accessed through your phone. If those accounts — banking apps, email, shopping accounts — already have been hacked, notify the entity to which the account is connected.

Always report all scams and fraud to your local law enforcement agency's nonemergency number. If you believe someone is in danger, call 911.

Report all scams and financial abuse to the state attorney general and the Federal Trade Commission.

Visit the National Association of Attorneys General website for the contact information of your state attorney general. Report scams to the FTC at ftc.gov/complaint.