

A Surprise For Some Phone Users

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About 1.9 million Californians are being informed this month by Pacific Telephone that their non-published telephone numbers are not so secret after all.

The company is informing subscribers, through green cards inserted in their phone bills, that, upon "formal request," the non-published numbers are provided to the following agencies:

City police and fire departments; county district attorneys, fire departments, narcotics agencies and sheriffs; state police and highway patrols, the Justice Department's Organized Crime and Criminal Intelligence Branch and Enforcement and Investigation Branch; the federal Drug Enforcement Administration, the FBI, the U.S. attorney, the U.S. marshal and the Secret Service.

Spokesmen for the telephone company emphasized that these agencies have been given unpublished phone numbers since the early 1950s, but only under "strict regulations" that include written requests, and in some cases, subpoenas.

Company spokesmen acknowledged, however, that this is the first time subscribers have been informed that such nonpublished information is given out to any agency.

The phone company decided to apprise customers of the practice after a consumer group calling itself CAUSE (for Campaign Against Utilities Services Exploitation) filed a complaint against the practice with the State Public Utilities Commission in Los Angeles.

A hearing on the issue will be held in Los Angeles on Tuesday.

Company spokesmen here emphasized that unpublished phone numbers are given to law enforcement and investigative agencies in such emergency matters as kidnappings, threats and conspiracies.