

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 1, 2011

Dan Hesse, CEO  
Sprint Nextel  
6391 Sprint Parkway  
Overland Park, KS 66251

Dear Mr. Hesse:

I write to request that you take immediate action to remedy a significant vulnerability in voicemail security protections available to Sprint customers. Right now, the voicemail accounts of Sprint customers are at risk of being hacked because of your company's security policies.

Earlier this year British police discovered that the voicemails of thousands of British citizens were hacked by the newspaper *News of the World*, a British subsidiary of the American company News Corporation. While we wait for the U.S. Department of Justice to conclude its investigation into whether News Corporation employees hacked the voicemail accounts of American citizens, Sprint can take immediate steps to implement simple changes to its security systems that can help prevent future voicemail hacking from occurring in our country.

According to security experts, several U.S. wireless carriers, including Sprint, are vulnerable to a hacking technique that anyone, regardless of technical skill, can use to break into voicemail accounts. This hacking technique exploits the fact that many Sprint customers have configured their voicemail accounts to not require a personal identification (PIN) number when they call their voicemail from their own phone. By "spoofing" the caller ID information using freely available tools, hackers can access many Sprint voicemail subscribers' accounts without being prompted for a PIN.

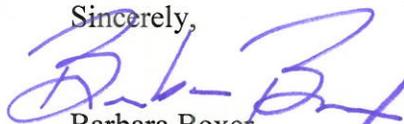
When Sprint subscribers first establish service, they are required to select whether they wish to enable the PIN bypass option. Although Sprint recommends against bypassing the PIN, Sprint's security advice focuses on the threat of a lost or stolen phone. Subscribers are not told about the existence or ease of voicemail hacking techniques.

In contrast, Verizon Wireless has always required subscribers to enter a PIN to access their voicemail, no matter the phone they are calling from. Similarly, AT&T recently announced that it too would be making strong security the default option for all new subscribers.

At a time when Americans are greatly concerned about the safety of the information they store on their computers and on their phones, it is time to make security the default.

I urge Sprint to implement stronger voicemail security features immediately.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator