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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Consumer Alert: New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission
and Office of Consumer Advocate
Warn Consumers About Modem Hijacking**

The State of New Hampshire's Public Utilities Commission and the New Hampshire Office of Consumer Advocate issued a warning to consumers today to exercise care when surfing the internet.

The Commission and the Office of Consumer Advocate cautioned consumers to be wary of a recent computer scam known as modem hijacking. Modem hijacking can affect any computer user with a dial-up modem connected to a telephone line, even if the computer user no longer uses dial-up Internet access. Most frequently, consumers fall victim to this scam from a pop-up ad that flashes onto the computer user's screen. When the user clicks on the pop-up ad, this action triggers the download of auto-dialer software from a third party. The downloaded software can then automatically dial long-distance phone numbers without the customer's knowledge resulting in unexpected charges on the customer's telephone bill.

The long distance charges associated with this scam can exceed \$8 per minute for lengthy and frequent calls. In most instances, customers are unaware of the scam until they receive their telephone bill containing hundreds or even thousands of dollars in long distance charges.

Based on information available to customers on the Federal Trade Commissions and Verizon's websites, here are some steps that computer users can take to reduce the likelihood that they will become a victim of this scam:

- If you use a dial-up Internet connection, make sure that your modem makes an audible noise so that you will hear any attempt to dial out. Also make sure to disconnect the telephone line to your modem when your computer is not in use.
- If you used to use a dial-up Internet connection and now use a DSL or cable modem connection, make sure the telephone line to your old dial-up modem is disconnected from the telephone jack.
- Always read pop-up windows very carefully and understand their content before you click "yes", "no" or "X".
- Ensure that your computer is running the latest version of an anti-virus software and always keep it updated.
- Ensure your computer is running a high quality spyware program and keep it updated. This will alert you when an attempt to download software to your computer is being made, whether with or without your consent.

If you believe that you are a victim of modem hijacking, contact the company billing you and dispute the charges on your bill. For further information or assistance with your bill, please contact the Public Utilities Commission's Consumer Affairs Division at 1-800-852-3793 or www.puc.state.nh.us/Consumer/complaint.htm to file your complaint online.