

# New phone procedure may discourage prank callers

**By John Fulwider**  
Staff Reporter

A new procedure for handling threatening, obscene and annoying phone calls will make reporting those calls easier and will decrease police workload, UNL Police Sgt. Bill Manning said.

The procedure is simple, Manning said. When people receive a threatening, obscene or annoying phone call, they need only to hang up and dial \*57. A series of automated

prompts will guide them through the procedure.

The procedure then traces the call and stores information about the caller in a telephone company computer.

The new service, offered by the Lincoln Telephone Company, costs \$1 per use. After two traces and at the customer's request, the phone company will send a letter to the person making the calls.

If the person being pranked wants

to take legal action, the phone company will release the information to the police. Users of the service will not be given the phone number of the traced call.

According to Lincoln Telephone Co., prank phone calls are prohibited by law. The maximum penalty for violation is a \$500 fine and three months in prison.

Previously when students received prank calls, they had to call the phone company or the police department to

report the calls and request a phone trap, Manning said.

If the calls occurred when the phone company was closed, Manning said, victims had to wait until the phone company re-opened.

Students who were pranked also had to record each legitimate phone call they received to compare with the list of trapped calls.

The new procedure makes that unnecessary, he said.

Handling prank-call cases con-

sumed a considerable amount of police time, Manning said. Since the start of the semester, he said, the university police have handled 45 new cases and followed up on 100 others.

Lela Kelliher, spokeswoman for Lincoln Telephone Co., said the new method was much better.

"It's a much more efficient and effective means of tracing," she said, "because it can happen right away, the minute the obscene call is received."

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