Burn After Calling: Disposable Phone Numbers

There's always a pause after someone asks, "Can I have your number?" Someone's silently wondering if complying will mean trouble.

What if you didn't have to worry about about that?

Enter the Burner App [1]. For $1.99 per use, iPhone owners can get a disposable, short-term phone number to use for business, pleasure or any combination of the two. From within the app, you choose an area code and ask for a number.

But like a prepaid phone card, when the time expires, no more calling. The number is "burned," or quarantined for two weeks before being recirculated.

Fresh Burner numbers are good for talk and text for seven days. During that week, you get up to 20 minutes of talk and 60 texts. You can add time to a burned number, too. An additional 30 days, 50 voice minutes and 150 texts costs about $2.50.

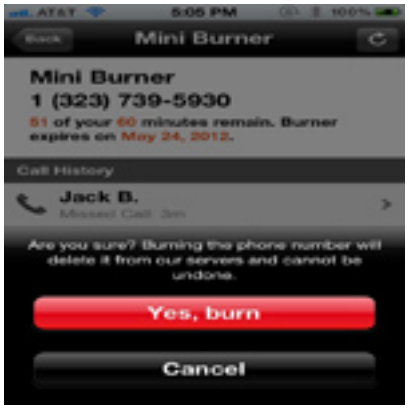
Burner requires you to have a phone plan in order to get a temporary line.

Nefarious deeds aside, burnable phone numbers can be useful when conducting transactions on sites like Craigslist, dating and connecting side businesses and short-term projects. And for those of us who just plain don't like giving our numbers to someone we just met.

The beauty of the app is the freedom people feel with a number they have no attachment to, says Will Carter, chief tech officer of Ad Hoc Labs, the company behind the Burner. Changing numbers to shake loose the wrong caller is even more

inconvenient than changing an email address.

"Phone numbers are so caught up in people's identities that it's a limiting factor," Carter said.



No, disposable phone numbers don't go hand in hand with crime, Carter explained. For one thing, they can be traced. Calls still go through your cell carrier and Twilio [2], the third-party company that dispenses numbers for the Burner App.

Carter admits his company keeps backups and logs of calls for a short time in order to debug and offer customer support.

"We're not trying to sell ourselves as encrypted, 100 percent secure," he said.

The app is limited to iPhone owners now, but Ad Hoc Labs plans to extend to Web and Android platforms.

Marc O'Krent, president of The Telephone Connection of Los Angeles [3], a voicemail service provider for doctors, thinks the app could be a hit.

"I think it's a great application," O'Krent said. "The limitation is that it uses a customer's existing message and data plan."

Read More: http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/burn-after-calling-disposable-phone-numbers.php [4]

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