

Reference: 02035067

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

7 August 2025

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning the unauthorised use of protected 2G–5G frequencies and investigations.

We received this request on 10 July 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the FOI Act”).

Your request & our response

The total number of recorded incidents from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2024 involving unauthorised use of protected mobile frequencies in the UK (2G, 3G, 4G, or 5G spectrum bands), which could indicate disruption or interception activity (for example, through unauthorised base stations or transmitters sometimes associated with IMSI catchers or SMS blaster devices).

The number of these incidents that led to formal Ofcom investigations or enforcement actions over the same period.

Any internal reports, briefings or investigation documents (within the cost limit) discussing the unauthorised use of protected 2G–5G spectrum which may involve such devices or techniques.

Our response

We can confirm that we do hold information falling within the scope of your request. However, we are unable to provide this information as we consider that disclosure of this information is exempt under section 12 of the FOI Act. Section 12 of the FOI Act provides that we are not obliged to comply with a request for information if we estimate that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the “appropriate limit”. The appropriate limit is set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 (the “Regulations”), and is, for Ofcom, £450. That sum is intended to cover the estimated costs involved in determining whether Ofcom holds the information requested, locating, retrieving and extracting the information from any document containing it. The Regulations provide that costs are to be estimated at a rate of £25 per person per hour, which equates to 18 hours of time.

With approximately 3600 documents and emails to retrieve, assess and consider whether they are in scope of the request, we estimate that it would take over 18 hours to extract the information you have requested.

We may be able to provide the information if the request was narrowed to the unauthorised use of spectrum in relation to mobiles.

Please note that even in the event of a narrower request, it is also likely that other exemptions under the FOI Act would apply, such as Section 30, which relates to information held for the purposes of investigations and proceeding, and Section 31 which relates to the prevention of crime.

If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Information Requests

Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress. Please email the Information Requests team (information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) to request an internal review.

Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner's Office](#).