

Why SMS Delivery is Delayed After a SIM Change: Why 24 Hour No SMS Rule

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In brief

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If you've recently changed your SIM card and noticed a delay in receiving SMS messages, you're not alone. This situation, although inconvenient, is not an issue—it's actually a security feature. Telecom providers temporarily block incoming SMS for 24 hours after a SIM change to prevent SIM fraud, a rising threat in today's world. Let's dive deeper into this phenomenon to understand its purpose, implications, and how to manage it effectively.

The Purpose of the 24-Hour SMS Block

In many countries, including India, obtaining a duplicate SIM or upgrading a SIM card is subject to stringent security checks. This includes a 24-hour block on incoming SMS. While outgoing calls, SMS, and data services remain functional, this block applies specifically to incoming SMS, including OTPs, personal messages, and promotional alerts.

Why This Rule Exists

The rule, mandated by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), aims to combat SIM swap fraud. Fraudsters often attempt to duplicate SIM cards to intercept sensitive information, such as OTPs used for banking transactions. By temporarily disabling incoming SMS on new or duplicate SIMs, telecom providers give legitimate users time to report unauthorized activity, ensuring their accounts and personal data remain secure.

When Will You Encounter the 24-Hour Delay?

- SIM Card Upgrade: Switching from 2G/3G to 4G SIMs.
- Mobile Number Portability (MNP): Changing your network provider while retaining your number.
- Duplicate SIM Issuance: Obtaining a replacement for a lost or damaged SIM.

During this time, while your SIM remains active for calls and data, incoming SMS—including critical OTPs—will not be delivered.

How the 24-Hour SMS Block Protects You

SIM fraud can have devastating consequences, including unauthorized access to bank accounts and identity theft. Here's how the block safeguards you:

- If a fraudster obtains a duplicate SIM, the original SIM holder is alerted by the loss of service on their SIM. The 24-hour block prevents the fraudster from immediately receiving sensitive OTPs or verification codes.

- This window allows the original SIM holder to report the issue to their telecom provider, ensuring the fraudulent SIM is deactivated.

Challenges Faced During the 24-Hour Block

- Missed OTPs: Online transactions, app registrations, or account verifications requiring OTPs will be delayed.
- Delayed Notifications: Vital SMS messages may not reach you during this period.
- Alternative Methods Needed: Services like WhatsApp may offer OTPs via call, but most platforms rely solely on SMS.

Steps to Manage the 24-Hour SMS Block

1. Wait Patiently

The block is automated and resolves itself after 24 hours. You do not need to contact customer support unless the issue persists beyond this period.

2. Use Alternate Verification Methods

Some apps and services, such as WhatsApp or banking platforms, provide OTPs via voice calls. Use these options when available.

3. Plan Ahead

If you anticipate needing SMS for important tasks (e.g., banking or app registrations), plan your SIM change accordingly.

Common Issues and Their Solutions

Why Am I Not Receiving SMS?

- Post-SIM Change Block: As explained, this is a mandatory security measure.
- Incorrect SMS Center Number: Ensure your device's SMS center number is correctly configured. Contact your provider for the correct details.
- Poor Network Coverage: Move to an area with a stronger signal.
- Third-Party SMS Blockers: Disable or uninstall any SMS-blocking apps on your device.

What If the Issue Persists Beyond 24 Hours?

If SMS services are still unavailable after the stipulated time:

- Restart your phone after reinserting the SIM card.
- Check your phone's messaging app settings and clear the app cache.
- Contact your telecom provider for further assistance.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What happens if I don't receive OTPs after 24 hours?

Contact your telecom provider's customer support to resolve the issue.

2. Do I need to activate SMS services after a SIM change?

No, SMS services are automatically enabled on all active SIM cards. If SMS isn't working, ensure you have an active plan that supports SMS.

3. Can I send SMS during the 24-hour block?

Yes, outgoing SMS services remain functional during this period.

4. Why does this block apply to all operators?

This is a TRAI-mandated rule enforced by all operators, including Airtel, Vodafone Idea, and BSNL.

5. Can I avoid the 24-hour delay?

Unfortunately, no. This security measure is universal and unavoidable.

The 24-hour block on incoming SMS after a SIM change or duplicate issuance is a critical security feature aimed at protecting users from SIM fraud. While it may seem inconvenient, this rule ensures that sensitive information remains secure and gives legitimate users the opportunity to safeguard their accounts. By understanding this measure, planning ahead, and utilizing alternative verification methods, you can minimize disruptions and stay secure in the digital world.