626A.02 INTERCEPTION AND DISCLOSURE OF WIRE, ELECTRONIC, OR ORAL COMMUNICATIONS PROHIBITED.

Subdivision 1. **Offenses.** Except as otherwise specifically provided in this chapter any person who:

(1) intentionally intercepts, endeavors to intercept, or procures any other person to intercept or endeavor to intercept, any wire, electronic, or oral communication;

(2) intentionally uses, endeavors to use, or procures any other person to use or endeavor to use any electronic, mechanical, or other device to intercept any oral communication when:

(i) such device is affixed to, or otherwise transmits a signal through, a wire, cable, or other like connection used in wire communication; or

(ii) such device transmits communications by radio, or interferes with the transmission of such communication;

(3) intentionally discloses, or endeavors to disclose, to any other person the contents of any wire, electronic, or oral communication, knowing or having reason to know that the information was obtained through the interception of a wire, electronic, or oral communication in violation of this subdivision; or

(4) intentionally uses, or endeavors to use, the contents of any wire, electronic, or oral communication, knowing or having reason to know that the information was obtained through the interception of a wire, electronic, or oral communication in violation of this subdivision; shall be punished as provided in subdivision 4, or shall be subject to suit as provided in subdivision 5.

Subd. 2. **Exemptions.** (a) It is not unlawful under this chapter for an operator of a switchboard, or an officer, employee, or agent of a provider of wire or electronic communication service, whose facilities are used in the transmission of a wire communication, to intercept, disclose, or use that communication in the normal course of employment while engaged in any activity which is a necessary incident to the rendition of service or to the protection of the rights or property of the provider of that service, except that a provider of wire communication service to the public shall not utilize service observing or random monitoring except for mechanical or service quality control checks.

(b) It is not unlawful under this chapter for an officer, employee, or agent of the Federal Communications Commission, in the normal course of employment and in discharge of the monitoring responsibilities exercised by the commission in the enforcement of chapter 5 of title 47 of the United States Code, to intercept a wire or electronic communication, or oral communication transmitted by radio, or to disclose or use the information thereby obtained.

(c) It is not unlawful under this chapter for a person acting under color of law to intercept a wire, electronic, or oral communication, where such person is a party to the communication or one of the parties to the communication has given prior consent to such interception.

(d) It is not unlawful under this chapter for a person not acting under color of law to intercept a wire, electronic, or oral communication where such person is a party to the communication or where one of the parties to the communication has given prior consent to such interception unless such communication is intercepted for the purpose of committing any criminal or tortious act in violation of the constitution or laws of the United States or of any state.

(e) It is not a violation of this chapter for a person:

(1) to intercept or access an electronic communication made through an electronic communication system that is configured so that the electronic communication is readily accessible to the general public;

(2) to intercept any radio communication that is transmitted:

(i) by a station for the use of the general public, or that relates to ships, aircraft, vehicles, or persons in distress;

(ii) by a governmental, law enforcement, civil defense, private land mobile, or public safety communications system, including police and fire, readily accessible to the general public;

(iii) by a station operating on an authorized frequency within the bands allocated to the amateur, citizens band, or general mobile radio services; or

(iv) by a marine or aeronautical communications system;

(3) to engage in any conduct which:

(i) is prohibited by section 553 of title 47 of the United States Code; or

(ii) is excepted from the application of section 605(a) of title 47 of the United States Code by section 605(b) of that title;

(4) to intercept a wire or electronic communication the transmission of which is causing harmful interference to any lawfully operating station or consumer electronic equipment, to the extent necessary to identify the source of such interference; or

(5) for other users of the same frequency to intercept any radio communication made through a system that utilizes frequencies monitored by individuals engaged in the provision or the use of such system, if the communication is not scrambled or encrypted.

(f) It is not unlawful under this chapter:

(1) to use a pen register or a trap and trace device as those terms are defined by section 626A.39; or

(2) for a provider of electronic communication service to record the fact that a wire or electronic communication was initiated or completed in order to protect the provider, another provider furnishing service toward the completion of the wire or electronic communication, or a user of that service, from fraudulent, unlawful, or abusive use of the service.

(g) It is not unlawful under this chapter for a person not acting under color of law to intercept the radio portion of a cordless telephone communication that is transmitted between the cordless telephone handset and the base unit if the initial interception of the communication was obtained inadvertently.

Subd. 3. **Disclosing communications.** (a) Except as provided in paragraph (b), a person or entity providing an electronic communications service to the public must not intentionally divulge the contents of any communication other than one to the person or entity, or an agent of the person or entity, while in transmission on that service to a person or entity other than an addressee or intended recipient of the communication or an agent of the addressee or intended recipient.

(b) A person or entity providing electronic communication service to the public may divulge the contents of a communication:

(1) as otherwise authorized in subdivision 2, paragraph (a), and section 626A.09;

(2) with the lawful consent of the originator or any addressee or intended recipient of the communication;

(3) to a person employed or authorized, or whose facilities are used, to forward the communication to its destination; or

(4) that were inadvertently obtained by the service provider in the normal course of business if there is reason to believe that the communication pertains to the commission of a crime, if divulgence is made to a law enforcement agency.

Subd. 4. **Penalties.** (a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) or in subdivision 5, whoever violates subdivision 1 shall be fined not more than $20,000 or imprisoned not more than five years, or both.

(b) If the offense is a first offense under paragraph (a) and is not for a tortious or illegal purpose or for purposes of direct or indirect commercial advantage or private commercial gain, and the wire or electronic communication with respect to which the offense under paragraph (a) is a radio communication that is not scrambled or encrypted, then:

(1) if the communication is not the radio portion of a cellular telephone communication, a public land mobile radio service communication, a cordless telephone communication transmitted between the cordless telephone handset and the base unit, or a paging service communication, and the conduct is not that described in subdivision 5, the offender shall be fined not more than $3,000 or imprisoned not more than 364 days, or both; and

(2) if the communication is the radio portion of a cellular telephone communication, a public land mobile radio service communication, a cordless telephone communication transmitted between the cordless telephone handset and the base unit, or a paging service communication, the offender shall be fined not more than $500.

(c) Conduct otherwise an offense under this subdivision that consists of or relates to the interception of a satellite transmission that is not encrypted or scrambled and that is transmitted:

(1) to a broadcasting station for purposes of retransmission to the general public; or

(2) as an audio subcarrier intended for redistribution to facilities open to the public, but not including data transmissions or telephone calls,

is not an offense under this subdivision unless the conduct is for the purposes of direct or indirect commercial advantage or private financial gain.

Subd. 5. **Civil action.** (a)(1) If the communication is:

(i) a private satellite video communication that is not scrambled or encrypted and the conduct in violation of this chapter is the private viewing of that communication and is not for a tortious or illegal purpose or for purposes of direct or indirect commercial advantage or private commercial gain; or

(ii) a radio communication that is transmitted on frequencies allocated under subpart D of part 74 of title 47 of the Code of Federal Regulations and that is not scrambled or encrypted and the conduct in violation of this chapter is not for a tortious or illegal purpose or for purposes of direct or indirect commercial advantage or private commercial gain, then the person who engages in such conduct is subject to suit by the county or city attorney in whose jurisdiction the violation occurs.

(2) In an action under this subdivision:

(i) if the violation of this chapter is a first offense for the person under subdivision 4, paragraph (a), and the person has not been found liable in a civil action under section 626A.13, the city or county attorney is entitled to seek appropriate injunctive relief; and

(ii) if the violation of this chapter is a second or subsequent offense under subdivision 4, paragraph (a), or the person has been found liable in a prior civil action under section 626A.13, the person is subject to a mandatory $500 civil fine.

(b) The court may use any means within its authority to enforce an injunction issued under paragraph (a), clause (2)(i), and shall impose a civil fine of not less than $500 for each violation of such an injunction.

History: *1969 c 953 s 2; 1984 c 628 art 3 s 11; 1986 c 444; 1988 c 577 s 14-18,62; 1989 c 336 art 1 s 1; art 2 s 8; 1990 c 455 s 3,4; 1991 c 199 art 2 s 1; 2023 c 52 art 6 s 16*