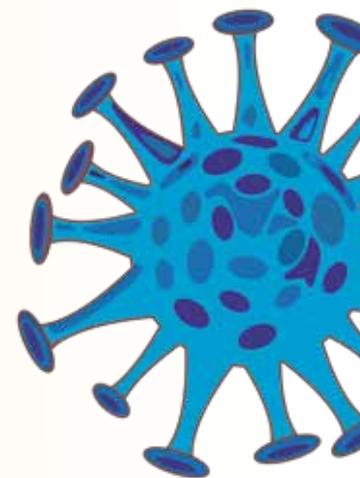


Don't Be a Victim of coronavirus SCAMS



As the coronavirus pandemic continues to impact the country, scammers have seized the opportunity to prey on consumers of all ages. Text message scams, scam robocalls, fake emails and social media posts, even official-looking letters in the mail are hitting as fast as the pandemic itself.

Opportunists are unscrupulous and surface faster than you can blink an eye each time there is a crisis. They target anyone and everyone they think will take the bait. While it used to be that senior citizens were the largest target group, with today's technology, scammers don't even bother to single out a particular group like they used to; they just go after the masses.

Scammers prey on financial and medical fears tied to the current pandemic. Knowing that many Americans are more isolated than ever before thanks to social distancing and quarantining, scammers are constantly changing their tactics to catch people off guard.

President Joe Colangelo said Local 246 is encouraging all members to be more vigilant and remember that if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. In fact, even the Internal Revenue Service has been sending out warning notices lately. Some scammers have been around for so long that they have had ample time to perfect they pitches to the point that they actually sound legitimate.

Seniors, students home from college, high schoolers trying to fill their days, and just about anyone distracted, overwhelmed, or distraught by the current pandemic is an easy target.

The Better Business Bureau website reports a large increase in the number of complaints since the pandemic began, with schemes often manifesting as someone impersonating a respected agency or government entity. For the most up-to-date information on the coronavirus scams, go to <https://www.ftc.gov/coronavirus>

Here are some basic rules to follow, as well as some coronavirus-specific scams that have already surfaced.

- Never give out your Social Security number, financial information, or personal information to anyone. If someone asks you to confirm it, do not.
- Do not transfer money or pay for something in advance of receiving a product or service. You will not get that product or service.
- Do not respond to calls or texts from unknown numbers.
- Never click on any link in a text message if you do not know who sent it. If the text does come from someone you know but the link seems odd, call that person and ask if they sent it.
- Government agencies will NEVER ask you for personal or financial information over the phone or in a text or email, and will NEVER ask you to send money.
- There is no vaccine for the coronavirus, Medicare is not offering a health kit, the CDC is not giving you a chance to purchase a vaccine kit, the Social Security Administration does not have a problem with your social security number that's preventing the government from issuing you a stimulus check, and there is no company with a massive stockpile of face masks, disinfecting wipes, toilet paper, and bleach waiting to ship you some if you provide them with your credit card number.
- While the Census Bureau is real, if you do not fill out the census yourself, no one is going to call you for answers. They will, however, knock on your door and present official identification. What they will NOT ask you for is your Social Security number.
- Do not donate to charities asking for money to help impacted by the coronavirus unless you can verify that it's a legitimate charity. Also, ask what percentage of your donation goes toward the cause and what percentage toward operating expenses of the organization itself. You might be surprised.
- The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is NOT going to call asking you to verify or provide your financial information so you can get your economic impact payment or tax refund faster. Watch out for emails, text messages, websites, and social media attempts that request money or personal information. Scammers may:
 - Emphasize the words "stimulus check" or "stimulus payment." The official term is economic impact payment.
 - Ask you to sign over your economic impact payment check to them.
 - Suggest you can get a tax refund or economic impact payment faster by working on your behalf. This scam could be conducted by social media or even in person.
 - Mail you a bogus check, perhaps in an odd amount, then tell you to call a number or verify information online in order to cash it.

To Learn More About COVID-19 Scams, Go To:

<https://www.fcc.gov/consumers>

<https://www.bbb.org/council/coronavirus/>

<https://www.bbb.org/ScamTracker>