

Coronavirus Scams and Fraud Alert

Sadly, there are people who take advantage of our current public health crisis to steal personal information and money. For your information, the Developmental Disabilities Council of Oklahoma has compiled this information to help you to avoid falling for a scam.

First, and always, DO NOT give out your personal information (social security number, mother's maiden name, Medicaid/health insurance number, etc.) to people you do not know. Everyone who NEEDS that information probably already has it.

Do not open your door to anyone you do not know. There are people going door-to-door saying they are from utility companies (those who supply gas, water, electricity, internet, cable TV, and phone service). They may tell you they need cash from you or they will turn off the service. There are people who tell you they are from the utility company to get into your house. You may be 100% certain that anyone who asks for cash or other form of payment by coming to your door is a scammer. No utility provider knocks on your door for payment. And no utility provider needs to come into your home to disconnect a service. If you didn't call a utility company to report a need for service, they will NOT come to your door.

There are also people going door-to-door saying they have test kits or "cures" for sale. Some even have official looking ID or business cards. THERE IS NO KNOWN CURE or VACCINE, and test kits are not available for purchase. You can again be 100% certain that someone selling any such product going door-to-door is a scammer.

If someone unknown to you knocks on your door, and you didn't request a service from them (like a plumber), ask them to leave. No legitimate company is walking door-to-door selling services during this health crisis. If the person does not leave immediately, lock your door and call the police. Some thieves work in pairs – one person keeps you talking at your front door while another enters your house from the back. Don't be scared – be careful!

You may also get an official-looking email from someone selling testing kits or cures. Be aware that it is VERY EASY to create an official looking email and email address. Again, there is no cure and no private company selling test kits. Delete these emails and DO NOT click on any links.

Known email scams that ask for personal information or money are called "phishing" scams. Phishing happens EVERY DAY – not just during public health emergencies. Even when the current health crisis is over, protect yourself from phishing!

There are legitimate charities seeking donations to help people who have lost jobs or who need additional financial help. In the coming days, weeks, and months it is certain you will be asked for a financial donation. If you can afford to donate to a legitimate charity – DO! But YOU should initiate any donation. Don't give out your credit card number over the phone to any person seeking a donation. And be very concerned if you are asked to purchase and send a gift card to anyone.

Be aware that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has extended the deadline for the filing of tax returns. Whether or not you have already filed a return, be aware that the IRS does NOT call or email for personal information or for payment. All communication from the IRS will come in writing via US Mail.

Many of us are expecting stimulus checks of up to \$1200. The US Treasury Department announced that stimulus checks will be sent via direct deposit beginning on April 17. The IRS has stated that there will soon be a secure web-based portal for people to update their direct-deposit information. THIS IS SOMETHING YOU MUST DO YOURSELF – no official will call you for account information! If you DO get a call or email for that information, it's a scam – HANG UP/DELETE THE EMAIL! If you do NOT have a means for direct deposit, checks will come in the mail.

Again, the federal government does business by US Mail – not phone, not email, and not by knocking on your door.

If you are not sure if someone is trying to scam you, call someone you trust to talk about it.

Remember, we're all in this together. If you suspect a fraud, you can call the National Center for Disaster Fraud at 1-866-720-5721 or by email at disaster@leo.gov. For more information about Coronavirus scams, you can visit the Federal Trade Commission's websites:

[Federal Trade Commission's webpage on COVID-19 Scams](#)

[Federal Emergency Management Agency's COVID-19 Rumor webpage](#)

[Federal Government's Central Coronavirus website](#)

Finally, there are also people who use emergencies to spread lies and other disinformation. While this may not seem a significant scam, it is damaging to our society. Get your information about Coronavirus from trusted sources – and don't share information that you do not know to be true. Again, there is no cure, and there is no vaccine. And while you may disagree with how your local, state, or federal government officials are dealing with this crisis, NO ONE wants anything more than for this immediate crisis to end. This crisis is causing each of us stress, pressure, fear, and confusion – but it WILL end.

Follow all instructions of your local and state government for actions you should be taking in response to Coronavirus by visiting their websites and watching the news. Things are changing DAILY and it's important to stay informed.