



## Office of Inspector General Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation

December 9, 2016

### **FRAUD ALERT**

#### **Unsolicited Telephone Calls from PBGC Imposters**

The Office of Inspector General is alerting pension recipients and the general public about scams involving individuals claiming to be Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation employees calling seniors regarding pensions they may or may not have earned. Please be aware that the PBGC will not make unsolicited telephone calls asking for personally identifying or financial information, demanding money or threatening you.

#### **What are some characteristics of these types of telephone scams?**

- Scammers use fake names and PBGC identification numbers to make it appear as if they are PBGC employees. They generally use common names and surnames to identify themselves.
- Scammers may be able to recite the last four digits of a victim's Social Security number, telephone number or home address to make it appear as though their call is legitimate.
- Some con-artists use technology to disguise their area code and telephone number in caller ID systems. Although it may look like they're calling from PBGC in Washington, DC, they could be calling from anywhere in the world.
- Scammers may send bogus PBGC emails to some victims to support their bogus calls.
- Victims may hear background noise of other calls being conducted to make it appear as if the call is coming from a legitimate call site.
- After threatening victims with jail time or driver's license revocation, scammers may hang up and others soon call back pretending to be from the local police or Department of Motor Vehicles. The caller ID the scammer uses may even support this bogus claim.
- Scammers may insert malicious computer code into seemingly harmless email file attachments. Recipients should not open any attachments or click on any links contained in an email message.

#### **To avoid become a victim of this type of fraud:**

- **Don't give out your personal information.** Scammers pressure people to divulge their personal information, including birth dates, social security numbers, bank account information so that they can steal money. Always keep your personal information, including bank account information, confidential. Tell the caller you will hang-up and call the PBGC

Customer Contact Center toll-free number to discuss your alleged pension issue. Then call the Customer Contact Center and your local law enforcement agency as needed.

- **Take control of the calls you receive.** If you want to reduce the number of telemarketing calls you receive, place your telephone number on the National Do Not Call Registry. To register online, visit [donotcall.gov](http://donotcall.gov). To register by phone, call (888) 382-1222 (TTY: (866) 290-4236) from the phone number you wish to register.

**How does the PBGC usually contact individuals about pension benefits?** PBGC will not initially contact you by phone, but rather through official correspondence sent through the U.S. Mail. A big red flag for these scams are angry, threatening calls from people who say they are from PBGC and urging immediate payment. Also, PBGC:

- Never requests immediate payment over the telephone and will not take enforcement action immediately following a phone conversation. Recipients will have already been receiving a pension from PBGC and will receive prior notification through official correspondence, sent by U.S. Mail, if you owe PBGC a refund of overpaid pension benefits.
- Never asks for credit card, debit card or prepaid card information over the telephone.
- Never insists that participants use a specific payment method to pay pension refunds.
- Never initiates contact with recipients by email or phone to request personal or financial information. This includes any type of electronic communication, such as text messages and social media channels.
- Never asks for PINs, passwords or similar confidential access information for credit card, bank or other financial accounts.

**Are you a victim?** If you believe you are or may have been a victim, file a complaint with the PBGC (as listed below) and your local law enforcement agency:

- If you know you owe PBGC money or think you might owe them money, call PBGC at (800) 400-7242 or (202) 326-4000. A PBGC representative can help you with a payment issue.
- If you've been targeted by this scam, you may also contact the Federal Trade Commission and use their "FTC Complaint Assistant" at [FTC.gov](http://FTC.gov). Please add "PBGC Telephone Scam" to the comments of your complaint.
- If you know you don't owe PBGC money or have no reason to think that you owe any pension refund then report the incident to PBGC Office of Inspector General HOTLINE at (800) 303-9737, TTY/TDD (800) 877-8339, [oighotline@pbgc.gov](mailto:oighotline@pbgc.gov) or visit us on the Web at <http://oig.pbgc.gov/hotline.html>

