



May 14, 2020

FRAUD ALERT

COVID-19 Fraud Schemes

The Office of Inspector General is alerting PBGC employees and pension recipients about scams involving the COVID-19 pandemic. As members of the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia's Metropolitan Area COVID-19 Anti-Fraud Task Force, we recommend everyone take the following precautions to avoid becoming a victim of these types of fraud:

- Be wary of any business, charity, or individual requesting payments or donations in cash, by wire transfer, gift card, or through the mail. Do not send money through any of these channels.
- Check the websites and email addresses offering information, products, or services related to COVID-19. Be aware that scammers often employ addresses that differ only slightly from those belonging to the entities they are impersonating. For example, they might use "cdc.com" or "cdc.org" instead of "cdc.gov."
- Be wary of unsolicited emails offering information, supplies, or treatment for COVID-19 or requesting your personal information for medical purposes. Legitimate health authorities will not contact the general public this way.
- Ignore offers for a COVID-19 vaccine, cure, or treatment. Remember, if a vaccine becomes available, you will not hear about it for the first time through an email, online ad, or unsolicited sales pitch.
- Check online reviews of any company offering COVID-19 products or supplies. Avoid companies whose customers have complained about not receiving items.
- Scammers may use this as an opportunity to get you to "verify" your tax filing information in order to receive your money, using your personal information at a later date to file false tax returns in an identity theft scheme.
- Be cautious of fraudulent offers for mortgage or rental assistance that require up-front payments such as cash, check, or wire transfer payments – no legitimate relief program requires up-front payments.
- Scammers are offering COVID-19 tests to Medicare beneficiaries in exchange for personal details, including Medicare information. However, the services are unapproved and illegitimate. Fraudsters are targeting beneficiaries in a number

of ways, including telemarketing calls, social media platforms, and door-to-door visits.

For information about the Department of Justice's efforts to stop COVID-19 fraud, visit www.justice.gov/coronavirus. If you think you are a victim of a scam or attempted fraud involving COVID-19, you can report it without leaving your home through a number of platforms. Go to:

- Contact the [National Center for Disaster Fraud](http://www.fraud.gov) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via email at disaster@leo.gov
- If it's a cyber scam, submit your complaint through <https://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>

You can report fraud regarding PBGC pension benefits by contacting the PBGC Office of Inspector General HOTLINE at (800) 303-9737, TTY/TDD (800) 877-8339, hotline@pbgc.gov or visit us on the Web at <https://oig.pbgc.gov/hotline.html>

