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9 Tips to Avoid Coronavirus Scams

Criminals are taking advantage of the current crisis and ramping up efforts to target people working from home.

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Scammers are taking advantage of fears surrounding Coronavirus to try and profit from consumers' fears, uncertainties and misinformation.

If you are in the US and wish to report a case of fraud, contact the FBI at Internet Crime Complain Center (IC3) : https://www.ic3.gov/complaint/default.aspx

Here are some tips to help you keep the scammers at bay:

- Hang up on robocalls. Don't press any numbers. Scammers are using illegal robocalls to pitch everything from scam Coronavirus treatments to work-at-home schemes. The recording might say that pressing a number will let you speak to a live operator or remove you from their call list, but it might lead to more robocalls, instead. If someone presses a number, the robocall center knows there is a live person on the other end!

- Ignore online offers for vaccinations and home test kits. Scammers are trying to get you to buy products that aren't proven to treat or prevent the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) — online or in stores. At this time, there are no Government approved home test kits for the Coronavirus.

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- Fact-check information. Scammers, and sometimes well-meaning people, share information that hasn't been verified. Social Media has proven to be full of misinformation and links to malicious websites. Before you pass on any messages, contact trusted sources to fact check.

  World Health Organization: COVID-19 Outbreak

  Center for Disease Control (CDC): Coronavirus

- Know who you're buying from. Online sellers may claim to have in-demand products, like cleaning, household, and health and medical supplies when, in fact, they don't. You should only purchase from known, established and reputable online sellers.

- Don't respond to texts and emails about checks or money from the Government. The details are still being worked out. Anyone who tells you they can get you the money now is a scammer. Remember, the IRS or the SBA does not text you, they want you to contact them!

- Be cautious of emails "sent" by people in authority asking you to wire money, transfer funds, purchase gift cards or email confidential information. A scammer can send an email that looks like the real thing but is actual an imposter pretending to be the person ("spoofed email").

  The economic upheaval caused by the Coronavirus has led to a flurry of unusual financial transactions – expedited orders, cancelled deals, refunds, etc. That's why an emergency request that would have raised eyebrows in the past might not set off the same alarms now. Compounding the problem,

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the bad guys know teleworking employees can't easily walk down the hall to investigate a questionable directive. Be sure staff know to call the person making the request directly, on a previously known good number to verify prior to taking any actions.

- Don't click on links from sources you don't know. Hover over a link to see where it is REALLY going before clicking it. When in doubt, skip it and DO NOT click it. They could download viruses onto your computer or device.

- Watch for emails claiming to be from the Health Canada, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization, or experts saying they have information about the virus. For the most up-to-date information about the Coronavirus, visit Canada Public Health the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

- Do your homework when it comes to donations, whether through charities or crowdfunding sites. Don't let anyone rush you into making a donation. If someone wants donations in cash, by gift card, or by wiring money, don't do it.

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Reported Scams

Here is a list of Scans reported to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Center. Our friends to the north are kind enough to post what they've been seeing, and we shouldn't be surprised to see something similar stateside. This list is not comprehensive as scams continue to evolve daily, if not hourly.

Fraudsters are posing as:

- **Cleaning or heating companies**
  - offering duct cleaning services or air filters to protect from COVID-19
- **Local and provincial hydro/electrical power companies**
  - threatening to disconnect your power for non-payment
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the World Health Organization**
  - offering fake lists for sale of COVID-19 infected people in your neighbourhood
- **Public Health Agency of Canada**
  - giving false results saying you have been tested positive for COVID-19
  - tricking you into confirming your health card and credit card numbers for a prescription
- **Red Cross and other known charities**
  - offering free medical products (e.g. masks) for a donation
- **Government departments**
  - sending out coronavirus-themed phishing emails
  - tricking you into opening malicious attachments
  - tricking you to reveal sensitive personal and financial details
- **Financial advisors**
  - pressuring people to invest in hot new stocks related to the disease
  - offering financial aid and/or loans to help you get through the shut downs

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- **Door-to-door salespeople**
  - selling household decontamination services
- **Private companies**
  - offering fast COVID-19 tests for sale
    - Only health care providers can perform the tests
    - No other tests are genuine or guaranteed to provide accurate results
  - selling fraudulent products that claim to treat or prevent the disease