

Watch Out for Scams

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The pandemic has presented an opportunity for a new variety of scams. Malicious actors use multiple approaches when conducting their scams. They can include the following:

- Misrepresenting themselves as health professionals, either in person or by email, offering vaccinations or testing for the disease.
- Claiming to be a bank official and offering investment advice citing COVID-19 as a reason to send them money.
- Claiming to be a hospital where a loved one is being treated and requesting money be wired immediately for a life-saving procedure.
- Claiming to be a friend who is stuck in a foreign country and cannot leave unless a virus-related fee is paid.
- Telling victims their computer has been infected with "corona virus" and offering to repair the device.
- Claiming to be a medical equipment distributor and asking for payment in advance via bank transfers, often to foreign countries.
- Pretending to be a health official and requesting personal information in order to conduct contact tracing to identify infected individuals they may have been in contact with.
- Sending emails while pretending to be a member of the CDC, WHO or another legitimate organization asking recipients to click on links that are malicious.
- Creating official looking websites or social media accounts used to infect a victim's computer.

The following measures can help prevent becoming a victim of a COVID-19 scam:

- Only use trustworthy websites instead of clicking on email links, attachments or pop-up advertisements.
- Change passwords regularly and ensure they are complex and varied from site to site.
- Keep anti-virus software updated and running.
- Use multi-factor authentication whenever possible.
- Be suspicious of anyone initiating contact regarding COVID-19 and offering advice on prevention, protection or recovery in exchange for money.
- Do not download purported COVID-19 apps. Most are malicious, such as turning on cameras and microphones on your phone. The most reliable COVID-19 info is available from the World Health Organization (www.WHO.int), Centers For Disease Control (www.CDC.gov), State of Illinois Coronavirus Response (coronavirus.illinois.gov), and Lake County Health Department (www.lakecountyil.gov).

Also, there are NO door to door COVID-19 survey takers or inspectors. Call 911 right away if someone comes to your door claiming to be. Do not let them into your home.