**What Scams Should I Know About COVID-19 and My Social Security Benefits**

Unfortunately, there are scammers who will take advantage of the current situation with COVID-19 and try to trick you out of your money and personal information.

If you receive calls, emails, or other communications claiming to be from the U.S. Treasury Department, the Internal Revenue Service, the Social Security Administration (SSA), or another government agency offering COVID-19 related grants or economic impact payments in exchange for personal financial information, or an advance fee, or charge of any kind, including the purchase of gift cards, please do not respond. These are scams.

Back in March, the Inspector General of Social Security, Gail S. Ennis, issued a warning to the public about fraudulent letters threatening suspension of Social Security benefits due to COVID-19-related office closures. The SSA will not suspend or discontinue benefits because its offices are closed to the public for in-person service. Any communication you receive that says SSA will do so is a scam. It is important to remain vigilant against scammers as this pandemic continues. SSA will never:

* Threaten you with benefit suspension, arrest, or other legal action unless you pay a debt, fine, or fee;
* Tell you that your Social Security number has been suspended, promise a benefit increase, offer to resolve identify theft problems, or other assistance in exchange for payment;
* Require payment by retail gift card, cash, wire transfer, internet currency like Bitcoin, or prepaid debit card;
* Demand secrecy from you in handling a Social Security-related problem, or tell you to make up a story to tell your friends, family, or store/bank employees;
* Send official letters, reports, or other documents containing personally identifiable information via email; or
* Text you unsolicited to tell you about a problem with your Social Security number or benefits.

Be very cautious if you receive an unsolicited call from the government and you don’t recognize the problem or issue they’re calling about. Do not provide personally identifiable information over the phone. If you receive a letter, text, call, or email that you believe to be suspicious, about an alleged problem with your Social Security number, account, or payments, hang up or do not respond.

If you ever owe money to SSA, the agency will mail you a letter with payment options and appeal rights.