

Beware: Scammers Posing as Social Security Investigators



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Scammers try to leverage two basic emotions to con their innocent victims: greed and fear. Greed is at the heart of “get rich quick” schemes and “you’ve won a lottery or sweepstakes” scams. To exploit people’s fear, con artists will try to convince their victims that they owe back taxes, or that they haven’t paid some fake government debt (often threatening that the sheriff or some other government agent is on their way to their house to arrest them unless

they immediately pay up) or they may claim that there is some “problem” that will affect a person’s rightfully earned government benefits.

The Federal Trade Commission warns that “crooks use clever schemes to defraud millions of people every year. They often combine sophisticated technology with age-old tricks to get people to send money or give out personal information. They add new twists to old schemes and pressure people to make important decisions on the spot. One thing that never changes: they follow the headlines—and the money.”

The Acting Inspector General of Social Security, Gale Stallworth Stone, is warning citizens about a nationwide telephone “imposter phishing” scheme trying to exploit the “problem” scenario. In a recent press release the Social Security Administration (SSA) and its Office of the Inspector General (OIG) say they “have received several reports from citizens across the country about persons receiving phone calls from individuals posing as OIG investigators. The caller indicates an issue exists pertaining to the person’s Social Security account or Social Security number (SSN) and directs the person call a non-SSA



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telephone number to address the issue. The reports indicate the calls include a recording from a caller stating she is “Nancy Jones,” an “officer with the Inspector General of Social Security.” The recording goes on to say the person’s Social Security account, SSN, and/or benefits are suspended, and that he or she should call 806-680-2373 to resolve the issue.”

While the scheme’s details may vary, you should not call the number provided, as the unknown caller might attempt to acquire your personal information, like your Social Security number or your bank account number, which the crook will then use to steal your identity. With

(Continued on page 2)

IN THIS *Issue*

- 1 Beware: Scammers Posing as Social Security Investigators
- 2 VA Chief Says, “Current Disability System is Not Sustainable.”
- 2 Comfort Food: Macaroon Ice Cream Torte
- 3 Disability for Back Pain
- 3 Game Zone

Cuddigan Law
10855 West Dodge Road, Suite #100
Omaha, NE 68154
cuddiganlaw.com
402.933.5318

