



Department of Justice



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Joint Statement: U.S. Attorney John C. Milhiser, FBI Special Agent in Charge Sean M. Cox Urge Public to Report Suspected COVID-19 Fraud

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – The following is a joint statement from Central District of Illinois U.S. Attorney John C. Milhiser and FBI Special Agent in Charge Sean M. Cox, Springfield Division:

“This is an uncertain time for all of us. We are justifiably concerned for our health and the health and safety of our families, friends, and neighbors, along with the myriad other concerns presented by this situation. Along with the medical community and health professionals, law enforcement agencies continue to work side-by-side to remain steadfastly committed to our mission to keep our communities safe.

“Unfortunately, while uncertainty can reveal the best of our society and citizens’ good will and generosity, scammers and fraudsters take advantage of others, to prey on people’s fears and to exploit our compassion and generosity. New scams will emerge; not only person to person, but also cyber criminals who will perpetuate scams to steal your money, by selling fake cures online and other forms of cyber fraud, such as phishing emails or malware inserted into mobile apps that appear legitimate to track the spread of the virus. These frauds attempt to exploit and target the elderly, the sick, and the economically disadvantaged.

We urge the public to exercise caution and be alert for scams and frauds, and to report suspected fraud schemes related to COVID-19 (the Coronavirus) by calling the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) hotline (1-866-720-5721) or to the NCDF e-mail address disaster@leo.gov. The NCDF can receive and enter complaints into a centralized system that can be accessed by all U.S. Attorneys, as well as Justice Department litigating and law enforcement components to identify, investigate and prosecute fraud schemes. The NCDF coordinates complaints with 16 additional federal law enforcement agencies, as well as state Attorneys General and local authorities.

“Our offices continue to work together closely with our state and local counterparts, and with our federal, state and local law enforcement partners, so that criminal wrong doers will be fully investigated and prosecuted, and face serious criminal punishment for preying upon the most vulnerable during this time.

“The bottom line is that we must continue to practice caution and awareness to protect ourselves from those who use a crisis situation as a way to fraudulently benefit themselves.

Another educational resource is a public service announcement issued today by the FBI that specifically outlines methods cyber scammers may employ to commit fraud:
<https://www.ic3.gov/media/2020/200320.aspx> Complaints may also be submitted directly to the FBI at www.ic3.gov

To find more about Department of Justice resources and information, please visit www.justice.gov/coronavirus

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