COVID-19 FRAUD

We already have enough to worry about with the threat of Covid-19 itself, and the financial issues that come along with it. Added to the stress of current events includes the new duty of home-schooling our children and trying to get items from the local grocery that are not in stock. Now we have other issues involving consumer fraud that are revealing themselves during this health pandemic. It is no surprise that wrongdoers are using this time to attack vulnerable individuals to try and exploit them using fear and panic of the unknown.

One known scheme is the selling of vaccine kits that don’t currently exist. Websites are popping up that claim the World Health
Organization is giving away vaccine kits, you just have to pay for the shipping & handling. The scam website has you enter your credit card information to pay for the $4.95 shipping fee of the kit. This is a scam! These websites are false and fraudulent. Do not give your credit card information to anyone claiming to sell vaccine kits.

Other scams offer Covid-19 "testing kits" and deals on hand sanitizer, wipes, and face masks. There are also other malicious websites that seek donations for organizations that do not exist.

Robo-Calls have been a consistent pain for our consumer population and it is no surprise the new tactic involves the cover of a fake response plan. In these robo-calls, the caller requests social security numbers and other personal information that could be used to steal identities.

With the information that the U.S. Government is planning to send money to all citizens as part of a stimulus package, be aware that the thieves will undoubtedly be posing as agents who need your bank account information in order to deposit your check. Never give anyone who calls you your bank account or other personal information!

Independently verify companies, charities, or individuals who contact you during this time. One way of verifying sites is to check the entity's website. For example, scammers might send emails from CDC.com or CDC.org when in reality the correct website is CDC.gov.

Please ignore offers regarding treatment, cures, or vaccines. If any of those become available, the first time you learn of legitimate treatments will not be through a email or website.

If you are wanting to donate, please do so wisely. You can always visit the Federal Trade Commission website (www.ftc.gov) for further details on the legitimacy of organizations.
The United States Department of Justice is asking for information on fraud schemes to be reported to them at https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus.

The above ALERT is part of the Montgomery County Prosecuting Attorney's initiative to help citizens become aware of ways they can avoid becoming a victim, or ways they can help stop criminal activity that may be occurring. Upon request, the office can provide presentations on crime prevention actions and activities to halt crime and increase the quality of life in our community.

If you would like additional information on the above ALERT, or would like additional information regarding our programs to assist consumers in general and/or seniors in particular, please contact Kimberly Melnick, Supervising Attorney, Adult Protection Unit, or Anthony Schoen, Supervising Attorney, Fraud and Economic Crimes Unit at 937-225-5757.

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