

SMP INFORMATION UPDATE -- Coronavirus Scam Alert --

ISSUE: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Scam Alert Warning to Avoid Imposter Scams and Claims of Miracle Medicines

Due to heightened attention to coronavirus, now officially known as COVID-19, scam artists are attempting to take advantage of consumers.

Scammers may post, email or text to promote false information about “cases” of the disease in a person’s neighborhood or promote bogus prevention medication in order to obtain personal information and money. Scammers also may ask a person to donate to coronavirus victims through a sham charity or offer “advice” about false treatments for the disease.

For the best available information regarding COVID-19, visit the CDC (Center for Disease Control) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html>. Florida also has information available at www.floridahealth.gov.

How to avoid this scam:

- **Don’t be a victim of click bait.** If you receive an email or text claiming to have news about Coronavirus, do not open it. Get accurate information about any updates from the CDC website.
- **Watch for imposter emails.** Look for emails claiming to be the CDC or the World Health Organization (WHO). If you are not already subscribed to receive emails from them, you should not get one randomly.
- **Ignore online offers for vaccinations or miracle treatments.** If you see ads touting prevention, treatment, or cure claims for the Coronavirus, ignore it. You won’t hear about medical breakthroughs for the first time from an ad or sales pitch.
- **Perform due diligence when considering a donation.** Do not donate to any organization claiming to help those sick from the Coronavirus unless you have done your research. Any charity soliciting in Florida must be registered with FDACS (Florida Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services). Call 1-800-HELP-FLA (800-435-7352) or use their online [Check-A-Charity](#) tool to find out if a charity is properly registered.
- **Watch out for scam “investment” opportunities.** The U. S. Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) has issued an investor alert about investment frauds involving claims that a company’s products or services will be used to help stop the coronavirus outbreak. Some internet promotions, including on social media, are claiming that the products or services of publicly traded companies can prevent, detect, or cure coronavirus, and that the stock of these companies will dramatically increase in value as a result. The promotions often take the form of so-called “research reports” and make predictions of a specific “target price.” More information is available at https://www.sec.gov/oiea/investor-alerts-and-bulletins/ia_coronavirus.

ACTION: Share with the public and within the SHINE, SMP, and ADRC networks.