



Coronavirus Scams: exploiting those trying to protect themselves

Alert message sent 18/03/2020 15:53:00

During this period of uncertainty regarding Covid-19, it appears that there are some people who are taking advantage of the situation and are targeting the most vulnerable. Although we appreciate the concern that is being caused by the outbreak, please continue to be cautious when dealing with callers at the door, unwanted phones calls and emails.

If everyone can tell 2 people about the following recent developments in their next phone conversation with a friend or neighbour, the message will soon reach all corners of the community.

This is a worldwide pandemic and no legitimate organisation will contact you out of the blue and ask for payment for information or access to treatment which doesn't exist. We are hearing reports of emails and phone calls asking for donations to help those in need during this time, or offering miracle cures, and door to door campaigns offering testing. Also, please be aware that the Red Cross are NOT doing door to door testing as has been suggested in some areas.

Unfortunately, some fraudsters are offering to do shopping for residents, taking the money and then not returning with the goods. Others have offered to take a shopping list along with a bank card. This would be considered as theft and should be reported to the police.

We don't want to discourage anyone from helping their neighbours or family members, and we don't want to breed distrust in those genuine members of the community trying to support others. We simply ask that you remain vigilant and:

1. Try to only liaise with people you know.
2. Only buy the essentials in this manner, therefore the amount of money required is minimal, do not hand over a bank card - use cash only.
3. If the person says they are from a community organisation, ask for some ID or to verify their identity by calling the organisation directly, not the number on the card.

Scammers are also sending out coronavirus-themed phishing emails which attempt to trick people into opening malicious attachments or revealing sensitive information about

themselves such as personal and financial details. In the same way that we have seen “fake” TV licensing and HMRC emails, we are now seeing phishing emails claiming to be from organisations affiliated with the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). There have also been some variations on current scams with fake emails appearing to be from HMRC offering a tax rebate due to the Coronavirus.

Please be aware of any suspicious emails and do not click on the links or attachments, and do not respond to any unsolicited messages or calls asking for your personal or financial details.

If you have been a victim of fraud or cybercrime, report it to Action Fraud via their website <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>, or by calling them on 0300 123 2040.

You can also contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service for consumer advice by calling 0808 223 11 33.

For anyone concerned about COVID-19 please refer to the NHS advice page - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Message sent by

Sharon May (Nottinghamshire County Council, Trading Standards Officer, Notts)