



FROM THE DESK OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

A THREAT TO BE AWARE OF

In a free society, one of the things that we cherish, is the ability to trust others and to be trusted by others. Unfortunately, we no longer live in a world where most people can be trusted. The days of going to bed and leaving doors and windows unlocked while we sleep safely in our beds at night are long gone. No longer can we take a stranger at his word without being in danger of finding out we have been misled or taken advantage of. One of the issues we are hearing too much about these days is that of the scam. Scammers take many forms. They range from a local criminal who takes advantage of people by going door to door selling products that they do not deliver to people calling in the middle of the night claiming to be a family member that is in jail in another state and asking for large sums of money to be sent for bail.

One of the most common scam methods being used today is that of people impersonating federal government agencies. According to the AARP website, the Federal Trade Commission received more than 2.5 million reports of these scams from 2017 through the middle of 2022, with losses of more than \$2 billion. These calls include calls about scams involving someone impersonating an IRS agent, Medicare official, Social Security Administration officer, FBI agent or other government worker

The AARP website listed the following examples of reported scams.

. 1. FTC fakes

The Helpline recently heard from a victim who lost \$150,000 to this scam, where a caller pretends to be an FTC commissioner and asks for or demands money, in the form of gift cards, cryptocurrency, or you name it. The FTC warns that this scam is on the rise, and notes, "Whether the caller promises you a prize or threatens you with arrest — and even if they give a (fake) badge number — that's a scammer." It adds that the FTC will never call, email, text or message you on social media to ask for money, nor will it threaten you with arrest. The agency asks people who receive these calls to report them to [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/whistleblower).

2. Medicare malice

A 90-year-old Maine resident received a call from someone claiming to be a Medicare official. The impostor said that Medicare was sending out new plastic cards [to protect beneficiaries from the spread of COVID-19](#). The caller needed to confirm his Medicare number to make sure the card was accurate. He gave his Medicare number to the scammer but reported the incident to Medicare in time to stop any rip-offs.

3. Grants gift

A “friend” on Facebook told a 69-year-old Riverside, California, woman that she had received a large federal grant. The woman was eventually talked into sending \$65,000 for a [promised \\$180,000 federal grant that never came](#). Turns out that the Facebook friend’s account was hacked and the contact had come from a scammer.

The government won’t reach out to offer you a federal grant. Grants require an application, and they are always for a specific purpose.

4. Social Security scam

An 85-year-old Maryland woman got a call from someone pretending to be a federal agent who said her [Social Security number](#) had been stolen and used to rent a car that was involved in a violent crime. This incident had compromised both her Social Security and bank accounts, she was told, and both were to be “suspended.” To keep access to money she needed to pay her bills, she was told to go to a local store and convert her cash in the bank to Bitcoin, then transfer it to a secure account that was set up for her. She did — and lost \$8,000 to impostors.

5. Student-loan con

A couple in Indianapolis got a call from someone who stated his government agency was handling the student-loan-forgiveness [debt-cancellation program](#) that President Biden had signed into law. The caller just needed their Social Security and banking information to complete the application. The couple complied, but then they grew suspicious and reported the encounter to the bank in time to stop any losses.

6. FBI flimflam

A 79-year-old Pembroke Pines, Florida, man was contacted by a [fake FBI agent who said he had won a \\$1.9 million sweepstakes](#), but the money was being held until he could pay fees and taxes. He eventually sent \$100,000 to what he believed was the FBI consumer affairs branch, and the money has not been recovered.

The bottom line: Don’t let your instinct to cooperate with someone claiming to be with the federal government be your downfall. This list of government practices should help you spot impostors.

Here are some things the government does and doesn't do.

- The federal government will not call you unsolicited and ask for personal information. The agencies already have details like your Medicare and Social Security numbers.
- Any important communications from the federal government usually come via the U.S. Postal Service.
- No federal government agency will initiate a serious contact with you through [social media](#), text or email.
- The government won't reach out to offer you a federal grant. Grants require an application, and they are always for a specific purpose.
- No government office will ask you for an upfront payment before sending you a benefit, grant or refund.
- The government won't suspend benefits from Social Security or Medicare because someone else misused your identification. Federal law enforcement agents also won't bully you into revealing personal information such as your bank account number.
- Agencies won't take payments in prepaid [gift cards](#), wire transfers or [cryptocurrency](#).

If you are aware of or suspect a scam you may report it at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.reportfraud.ftc.gov). Also, if you are a victim or contacted on the internet by a suspected scammer, you can file a complaint online at [ic3.gov](https://www.ic3.gov). Local law enforcement can take a report for you if you are a victim of a scam. But these scams are very hard to trace and resources are limited to fight these things. So, the bottom line is that you must be very vigilant and careful not to fall victim to a scam. If you are in doubt when contacted by someone claiming to be with the federal government, never give them any information over the phone or internet. Hang up and attempt to call the agency they claim to be from and inquire about the legitimacy of the caller.

Anthony Brown, Chief of Police