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Scammers Look to Cash in on Coronavirus

Kenosha - Any time there is a disaster, either natural or man-made, you can be sure that scammers will be there lurking, trying to take advantage of the situation to fill their pockets. The coronavirus pandemic is no different. Already, a number of distinct scams have emerged, and consumer protection experts, including the Federal Trade Commission and Wisconsin State Attorney General Josh Kaul, are warning consumers to beware. Some of the more common scam types seen so far include:

- Undelivered goods - Online sellers will claim to have an in-demand product like cleaning or medical supplies. You place an order but never receive the product. Check out sellers as thoroughly as possible before buying by searching the person or company's name, phone number and email address; pay by credit card and keep a record of your transactions.
- Fake charities - Many of us are looking for ways to be helpful, and scammers are looking for ways to exploit your generosity. Make sure to do your research before giving to any cause or organization. When you do give, pay safely by credit card and never with a gift card or wire transfer.
- Fake emails, texts and phishing - Scammers will use fake emails or texts to get you to share personal information such as account numbers, Social Security numbers or login IDs and passwords in order to steal your identity. They also use phishing emails, designed to look legitimate, to get access to your computer or network. If you click on a link, they can install ransomware or other programs that can lock you out of your data. Scammers will use familiar company names or pretend to be someone you know. Keep your computer software up to date and use security software as backup. Never click on a link you receive in an email from a company or from someone you may or may not know.
- Robocalls - Scammers will use illegal robocalls (disregarding the Do Not Call list) to try to sell anything and everything, including fake Coronavirus "cures" or work-from-home schemes. If you receive one of these calls, simply hang up. The recording may instruct you to press a certain button to be removed from "their list" or speak to a live person; in reality, pressing a button lets the scammers know that the number is active and will likely lead to more robocalls.
- Testing scams - Scammers are selling fake at-home test kits or going door-to-door performing fake tests for money. Don't buy or trust any test that doesn't come from a known medical professional.
- Provider scams - Scammers will contact you posing as doctors or hospitals that have treated a friend or relative for COVID-19 and demanding payment.

If you or someone you know believe that you've been the target or victim of an outbreak-related scam, you should: 1) File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, either online (ftc.gov/complaint) or by phone (1-877-382-4357); 2) File a complaint with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer

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Toll-Free Office Hotline: 1-888-769-4724

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Protection, by email (DATCHotline@wisconsin.gov), phone (800-422-7128) or online (datep.wi.gov); and/or
3) Contact the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center by visiting www.IC3.gov.

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