

The United States Department of Justice

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Three Alabama U.S. Attorneys and the Alabama Attorney General Partner to Protect Alabamians

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – United States Attorney Jay E. Town for the Northern District of Alabama, United States Attorney Louis V. Franklin for the Middle District of Alabama, United States Attorney Richard W. Moore for the Southern District of Alabama, and Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall join forces to uncover, investigate, prosecute, and dismantle any frauds, price gouging, or scarce material hoarding related to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

“While the crisis has brought out the very best in most Americans, there are those unfortunate exceptions among us that the rule of law will deal with,” U.S. Attorney Jay E. Town said. “There is no daylight between Alabama’s three United States Attorneys and the Alabama’s Attorney General. We will not allow a public health crisis become a public safety crisis, which is why we will continue to share crime intelligence about not only COVID-19 related frauds, but all criminal activities in the Great State.”

“Unfortunately, criminals have never seen a crisis that they couldn’t find a way to exploit,” U.S. Attorney Louis V. Franklin said. “They will use any tragedy or crisis to take advantage of those who are most vulnerable and in need of assistance. I would remind everyone to remain vigilant and always verify offers or claims before making any decision with regard to the Covid-19 pandemic. I stand with my colleagues and will use every tool available to ensure the safety of our citizens.”

“It is critical that our citizens be aware that various frauds are being attempted during this coronavirus pandemic,” U.S. Attorney Richard W. Moore said. “I encourage everyone to read the list of potential scams below and be prepared to exercise common sense caution if you are contacted by anyone pitching anything resembling one of these scenarios. We will vigorously prosecute fraud victimizing the citizens of Alabama, but we prefer that our citizens first exercise prudence and help us avoid becoming unnecessary victims. The U.S. Attorneys and

our Alabama Attorney General are dedicated to a coordinated prosecution of those who take advantage of our citizens during this difficult time.”

“I am proud to join with my federal partners as a force multiplier in identifying and holding accountable those criminals who prey upon Alabamians during times of crisis,” said Attorney General Steve Marshall. “Whether through scams targeting a victim’s confidential information or price gouging the public, those who seek to exploit the vulnerable during this time of emergency are on our radar.”

Some examples of coronavirus and COVID-19 scams include:

- **Treatment scams:** Scammers are offering to sell fake cures, vaccines, and advice on unproven treatments for COVID-19.

- **Hoarding and Price Gouging scams:** The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has designated certain health and medical resources necessary to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as “scarce,” including respirator masks, ventilators, and other medical protective equipment. These designated materials are subject to the hoarding prevention measures that trigger both criminal and civil remedies.

- **Supply scams:** Scammers are creating fake shops, websites, social media accounts, and email addresses claiming to sell medical supplies currently in high demand, such as surgical masks. When consumers attempt to purchase supplies through these channels, fraudsters pocket the money and never provide the promised supplies.

- **Provider scams:** Scammers are also contacting people by phone and email, pretending to be doctors and hospitals that have treated a friend or relative for COVID-19, and demanding payment for that treatment.

- **Charity scams:** Scammers are soliciting donations for individuals, groups, and areas affected by COVID-19.

- **Phishing scams:** Scammers posing as national and global health authorities, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), are sending phishing emails designed to trick recipients into downloading malware or providing personal identifying and financial information.

- **App scams:** Scammers are also creating and manipulating mobile apps designed to track the spread of COVID-19 to insert malware that will compromise users’ devices and personal information.

- **Investment scams:** Scammers are offering online promotions on various platforms, including social media, claiming that the products or services of publicly traded companies

can prevent, detect, or cure COVID-19, and that the stock of these companies will dramatically increase in value as a result. These promotions are often styled as "research reports," make predictions of a specific "target price," and relate to microcap stocks, or low-priced stocks issued by the smallest of companies with limited publicly available information.

Check Scams: Scammers are contacting people over email and are telling them that their check, as part of the stimulus package responding to COVID-19, is already waiting for them and that all they need to do is to provide personal information, such as bank account numbers and Social Security Numbers, which are the key pieces of information needed to perpetrate identity theft.

If you believe you have been a target or victim of a scam or fraud or have knowledge of any hoarding or price-gouging of critical medical supplies, you can report it without leaving your home to:

- National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or via email at www.disaster@leo.gov
- Consumer Interest Division of the Alabama Attorney General's Office using the online form available at <https://www.alabamaag.gov/consumercomplaint>, or by calling 1-800-392-5658