



Fraud Advisory

Social Security Administration
Office of the Inspector General

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www.socialsecurity.gov/oig

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Social Security Inspector General Warns Public about Telemarketing Fraud in Maine

Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr., Inspector General of Social Security, is warning citizens about a fraudulent "telemarketing" scheme that has surfaced across the United States, including recently in Maine. The Social Security Administration (SSA) office in Augusta has received reports of telephone calls in which people falsely claim to be Social Security employees to obtain personal information from Social Security beneficiaries.

Inspector General O'Carroll urges all citizens to take precautions when giving out personal information over the telephone or the Internet. "You should never provide your Social Security number, bank account numbers, or other personal information over the Internet or by telephone unless you are extremely confident of the source to whom you are providing the information."

This telephone fraud scheme has several variations. In Maine, callers with foreign accents have claimed that SSA needs to update beneficiary information as part of an effort to issue new Medicare cards. In other versions, callers request bank account information for direct deposit of the upcoming stimulus tax rebate, or to "verify" future entitlement to Social Security benefits or direct deposit of benefits.

"That unscrupulous individuals would use the Social Security Administration's name and reputation to take advantage of those who rely on our benefits for their well-being is an outrage," said Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security.

If a person has questions about someone who claims to be a Social Security representative, O'Carroll recommends contacting his or her local Social Security office, or calling Social Security's toll-free customer service number at **1-800-772-1213**, to verify the legitimacy of the employee and the call. (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can call Social Security's TTY number at 1-800-325-0778.)

Individuals may report suspicious activity involving Social Security programs and operations to the Social Security Fraud Hotline at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/oig/hotline/>, or by phone at 1-800-269-0271. (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can call the OIG TTY number at 1-866-501-2101.)