

# ***FTC Consumer Alert***

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer & Business Education

## **Vets: Delete Unsolicited Offers by Email; Don't Disclose Personal Information to Unsolicited Callers**

In the wake of the recent data breach at the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), the Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency, is cautioning veterans and their families to be on the alert for scams that target their personal information. Law enforcers say that in the past, fraudsters have taken advantage of people in vulnerable situations through email and the telephone.

Law enforcers say that fraudsters might use various techniques, including email or the telephone, to deceive consumers into disclosing their credit card numbers, bank account information, Social Security numbers, passwords, or other sensitive personal information. Phishing is an email-based scam — an email that appears to come from a bank or other organization that asks you to verify account information, and then directs you to a bogus website whose only purpose is to trick you into divulging your personal information. Fraudsters also lie on the telephone about who they are to get someone to disclose personal information. Regardless of the way they get your information, scammers could use it to commit identity theft or fraud.

The FTC offers this advice for veterans and their families to deter ill-meaning phishers and callers:

- Don't give out your personal information over the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you initiated the contact and know — or can verify — who you are dealing with.
- Never click on links sent in unsolicited emails. Instead, type in a Web address you know to be accurate.
- The VA, other government agencies, and legitimate businesses do not contact people by email or telephone to ask them for — or to confirm — Social Security numbers or other personal information.

For more information about online scams and frauds, visit [OnguardOnline.gov](http://OnguardOnline.gov), which provides practical tips from the federal government and the technology industry to help you be on guard against Internet fraud, secure your computer, and protect your personal information.

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit [ftc.gov](http://ftc.gov) or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft, and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

[ftc.gov](http://ftc.gov)

1-877-FTC-HELP

FOR THE CONSUMER

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