



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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DOH WARNS CONSUMERS ABOUT PHONE SCAMS

HONOLULU -- The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) is issuing a warning for consumers to beware of a person posing as a DOH employee and offering gifts and incentives for health care services over the phone. The Department has been receiving calls from concerned residents regarding these phone scams.

"Do not under any circumstances provide your personal information to anyone unless you know the person with whom you are dealing," warned DOH Spokeswoman Janice Okubo. "Just because someone says they are from a government agency does not mean it's true."

The DOH wants to remind consumers to beware of callers offering free gifts or services in exchange for personal information. The public is advised to not give out any personal information over the phone – unless you made the call or know the caller. The DOH does not offer free gifts or promotions over the phone. The Department does not have offices outside of the State of Hawaii.

Tips for consumers:

Keep the following tips in mind whenever you hear a phone solicitation:

- Don't be pressured to make an immediate decision.
- Don't give your credit card, checking account, or Social Security number to unknown callers.
- Don't buy something merely because you'll get a "free gift."
- Be cautious of statements that you've won a prize — particularly if the caller says you must send money to claim it.
- Don't agree to any offer where you have to pay a registration or shipping fee to receive a "prize."
- Get all information in writing before you agree to buy.
- Check out a charity before you give. Ask how much of your donation actually goes to the charity.

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Ask that written information be sent to you so you can make an informed giving decision.

- Don't invest your money with an unknown caller who insists you make up your mind immediately.
- If the offer is an investment, check with your state securities regulator to see if it's properly registered.
- Don't send cash by messenger or overnight mail. If you use cash rather than a credit card in the transaction, you may lose your right to dispute fraudulent charges.
- Make sure you know the per/minute charge for any 900 number call you make.
- Check out unsolicited offers with the Better Business Bureau, or state's office of consumer protection before you agree to send money.
- Beware of offers to "help" you recover money you may have lost previously. Be wary of callers saying they are law enforcement officers who will help you get your money back "for a fee."
- Put your telephone number on the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) Do Not Call Registry by calling 1-888-382-1222 (TTY 1-866-290-4236) from the telephone number you want put on the Registry. You may also register online at www.donotcall.gov.
- If you suspect a scam, call the **State's Office of Consumer Protection at 587-3222**.

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