

# **USDA FOOD STAMP FRAUD ALERT**

**What is happening?** Food stamp benefit dollars are being stolen from store accounts.

**How does this happen?** Someone may call your store pretending to be an EBT vendor or a Food Stamp official. He or she will say s/he must test your EBT machine immediately or it will stop working. The caller will instruct you to enter a series of numbers followed by a dollar amount. These are valid EBT card and PIN numbers. The transactions you are completing are key-entered refunds. Money is moved from your store's account to the EBT cardholder account. This is NOT a test. Money has been and is being stolen from stores like yours. The refunded food stamp benefits are then quickly spent or trafficked in other locations.

**How can I identify this scam?** Calls can come from any place in the country and can be placed to any retailer in the country. You will know it is a scam if you are called and asked to key in numbers and a dollar amount on your point-of-sale terminal. Never key-enter information into your point-of-sale terminal for anyone over the phone!

**What should I do if I get called?** If you get called you should hang up and call your FNS field office (see contact information below) and report it. Provide as much information as you can.

**What should I do if I get scammed?** If money is stolen from your store you should file a report with your local police department. Neither the Federal government nor the State in which your store is located is liable for losses that occur as a result of these scams.

**When is it OK to key-enter transactions?** Key-entry of EBT card numbers is intended to allow food stamp clients to make purchases when your point-of-sale terminal is not operating correctly or the client's card is bad. Key-entry of EBT card numbers is only allowed when a client is physically present at your store and has their card in-hand. Key entry should never be allowed if the client and card are not present.

**What should I do if my point of sale equipment is not operating properly?** Call the help number given to you with the equipment to request a repair. Note that advance written notice is provided from your EBT vendor when vendor-initiated equipment changes or updates are planned.

If you have questions, please contact your local Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Field Office. If you are not sure who to call, check our Website at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/Contacts/FieldOffices/default.htm>, or call our toll free FNS retailer line at 1-877-823-4369, and a representative can locate your FNS Field Office.

**PLEASE POST THIS FRAUD ALERT AS A REMINDER  
TO ALL OF YOUR EMPLOYEES**