



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 Illinois

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 Illinois. The Social Security Administration (SSA) office in Harrisburg 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 Illinois, callers with foreign accents have requested bank account information to set up direct debit of Medicare premiums, claiming that premiums will no longer be deducted from Social Security payments. In other versions, callers request bank account information to update Medicare cards, for direct deposit of the upcoming stimulus tax payment, or to "verify" future entitlement to Social Security benefits.

This type of telemarketing scheme could lead to bank fraud or identity theft, in which personal information is misused to obtain credit, goods, or services. More information about identity theft is available from the Federal Trade Commission, at www.ftc.gov/idtheft or 1-877-ID-THEFT.

"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.

To verify that a caller is a Social Security representative, O'Carroll recommends that individuals contact their local Social Security office, or call Social Security's toll-free customer service number at **1-800-772-1213**. (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 (TTY 1-866-501-2101).