Avoiding COVID-19 Scams

Keyla Hernandez-Ulloa
Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division
Topics

• About the Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division

• COVID-19 Scams

• Resources

• Robocalls and Spoofing
Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division

The Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division (CAOD) engages with the public through outreach and education initiatives to inform them about important consumer-related regulatory programs, telecommunications issues and other issues that impact daily life.
COVID-19 Scams
Sample Delivery Scam Text

Text Message
Today 9:34 AM

Hi, we are having issues releasing your package

Please update shipping directions ca.trcck.com/.1ebf9d

Reply Stop to Opt Out
As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to impact the United States, phone scammers have seized the opportunity to prey on consumers.

A text message scam may falsely advertise a cure or an offer to be tested for coronavirus.

For more information about scam calls and texts, visit fcc.gov/consumers

Do not click on links in texts related to the virus!
#ProtectingConsumers
#FCCtips

Do not click on links in texts related to the virus, and check fcc.gov/covid-scams for more scam information.
Sanitize Your Phone

• Unplug the device before cleaning.
• Use a lint-free cloth slightly dampened with soap and water.
• Don’t spray cleaners directly onto the device.
• Avoid aerosol sprays and cleaning solutions that contain bleach or abrasives.
• Keep liquids and moisture away from any openings on the device.

Examples of COVID-19 Scams:

• Bogus COVID-19 Tests and Pharmacy Offers
• Peer-to-Peer Mobile Payment Apps
• Package Delivery Scams
Additional Resource

Requests for accessible formats of this information - Braille, large print or screen-reader friendly versions - can be sent to fcc504@fcc.gov.
American Sign Language Resources

• The Federal Communications Commission recently launch an ASL Video on COVID-19 Scams. It is currently available at the American Sign Language Video Library at https://www.fcc.gov/asl-video-library and on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvGbzQHpMBo.

• The video offers tips for avoiding COVID-19 Scams and information for how to file an informal complaint via www.fcc.gov/complaints or through the ASL Consumer Support Line, call 844-432-2275.
Robocalls

- Robocalls are made with an auto dialer or use a prerecorded or artificial voice. Technological advances make it easier to place illegal robocalls that mask the identity of the caller.

- Not all robocalls are illegal.
Robocall Tips

• Don’t answer calls from a number you do not recognize.
• If you pick up the call and you are asked to press a button to stop getting calls, hang up.
• Do not answer any questions, especially those that can be answered with “Yes.” Your response may be recorded and used fraudulently for unauthorized purchases or illegal activity.
• Never provide personal information such as date of birth, account numbers, Social Security numbers, passwords, Mother’s maiden name or other identifying information to unknown or unexpected callers.
Additional Robocall Tips

• If you receive an unexpected call from someone claiming to be from a company or agency, asking for personal information, hang up. Look up the phone number on their website, a recent statement or the phone book.

Spoofing

• Spoofing occurs when a caller deliberately falsifies the information transmitted to your caller ID display to disguise their identity.

• Spoofing someone else’s phone number is illegal when it is done with the intent to defraud, cause harm or wrongly obtain anything of value.

• More information: www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/spoofing-and-caller-ID.
Spoofing Tips

• When you receive a call and you are in doubt if the call is legitimate or not, let the call go to voice mail or an answering machine.

• Ask your service provider if and what call blocking tools they offer.

• Check to see what apps you can download to your mobile device.
Tips to Avoid Being Scammed

A reminder of some tips to avoid being scammed include:

• Do not respond to calls or texts from unknown numbers.

• Be cautious if you are being pressured to share any information or make an immediate payment.

If you believe you have been a victim of a COVID-19 Scam immediately report it to the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721. For COVID-19 robocall or text scams file an informal consumer complaint at www.fcc.gov/complaints.
Resources

• Consumer Help Center: www.fcc.gov/consumers

• COVID-19 Scams: www.fcc.gov/covid-scams

• Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division: www.fcc.gov/outreach and outreach@fcc.gov.

• Consumer Complaint Center: www.consumercomplaints.fcc.gov or call 1-888-CALL FCC (1-888-225-5322).
Thank You!

Keyla Hernandez-Ulloa

Associate Division Chief

Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division

Keyla.Hernandez-Ulloa@fcc.gov