

Beware of a Social Security imposter scam on the rise

by Fraud.org a project of the National Consumers League

One of the most sensitive pieces of personal information is a consumer's Social Security number (SSN), used by companies, the government, and other institutions to identify individuals--and highly sought-after by identity thieves.

In our era of data breaches, electronic transactions, and privacy concerns, scammers are aware of how concerned consumers are about guarding their SSNs, and that is why we are seeing an increase in the "Social Security imposter scam."

The Federal Trade Commission received more than 76,000 reports about the Social Security imposter scam in the past 12 months alone. With average losses of \$1,500, this new scam is quickly becoming one of a fraudsters' favorite tricks.

The scam usually begins with a consumer receiving a call from someone claiming to be with the Social Security Administration. The caller informs the victim that their SSN has been suspended because it was stolen or has been involved in a crime.

In a variation on this scam, the caller may also reach out to tell a victim that they qualify for an increase in benefits. All they need to do is provide the scammer with some information. Typically, these callers will ask their victims several questions to get personal information that they can then use to steal their identity or drain their bank accounts.

Because of the numerous data breaches, these scammers may have access to accurate personal information--such as an individual's real SSN--that they can use to build trust and appear legitimate. Regardless, before concluding the scam, fraudsters will almost always request payment to "unfreeze" the SSN or to process the increase in benefits. The scammer may request that they be paid via an unusual payment method such as by gift card, or some form of cryptocurrency like Bitcoin.

Continued on page 2

Important Account Notification

Effective September 1, 2019 the fee for stop payments will be \$30.

Attention Traditional IRA Owners Receiving RMD Distributions

Payments from your IRA are subject to federal income tax withholding, unless you elect not to withhold. You may change your withholding election at any time prior to the receipt of your payment. To change your withholding election, please stop into a branch and complete the Traditional IRA Periodic Payment Change.

Holiday Closings

All branches of MidWest America will be closed in observance of:

Independence Day - Thursday, July 4th
Labor Day - Monday, September 2nd



It was a beautiful evening at the Patriots Club Appreciation event. Nearly 60 guests joined MidWest America for food, fun, and prizes at Parkview Field. The theme for the game was "Princess Night" and several of our guests joined the fun by wearing tiaras.

Social Security imposter scam (continued)

One complaint received from a consumer in Florida is typical of the scam:

"I received a call from the Social Security office explaining my Social Security number had been stolen and someone is committing money laundering [with the number]." The thieves had "abandoned a car with drugs in it, [that was] purchased in my name [and] found in Texas."

In order to resolve the issue, the consumer was "told to secure assets by purchasing gift cards," and provide the gift card numbers to the Social Security office. The consumer was told that he would receive a refund equal to the amount he paid to unfreeze their account by the Federal Reserve in a few weeks. Unfortunately, the consumer never received a refund, and he lost nearly \$20,000 to this scam.

While the scam can be devastating, there are several steps you can take to prevent yourself, and your loved ones, from falling victim to this scam:

- Don't trust caller ID. Scammers are very good at spoofing your caller ID to make it appear they are calling from a government agency. If you receive an unexpected call from Social Security, don't answer it. Instead, call Social Security's customer service number at **1-800-772-1213** to see if they were actually trying to contact you.
- Remember, Social Security will never suspend your Social Security number. If someone contacts you saying your number has been suspended, they are trying to steal from you.
- Social Security will never call and demand that you wire them money or pay them with gift cards or cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin. Any supposed Social Security officer that makes this request is a fraudster.
- Don't give out your personal information on request. If you are asked to confirm your Social Security number or bank account number by a phone call or email you did not initiate, it is a scam.
- Don't trust a caller just because they know some of your personal information. Sadly, due to numerous data breaches, we have received reports that fraudsters are providing victims with their SSN to build trust. Just because an individual knows your Social Security number or some other piece of personal information, they are not necessarily legitimate.
- Spread the word. The Social Security imposter scam is relatively new, and many Americans may be unaware of it. You can prevent additional victims from falling for this scam. Please mention this scam, or forward this alert, to friends and loved ones. Together, we can stop this scam from growing, and protect Americans from identity theft, and prevent victims from losing their savings to fraudsters.

The Social Security imposter scam can be difficult to detect and is growing in popularity. If you come across this scam, or if you fall victim to it, report it! You can file a complaint at **Fraud.org** via a secure online complaint form. Your complaint will be shared with a network of more than 90 law enforcement and consumer protection agency partners who can and do put fraudsters behind bars.



Billing Rights Notice

This notice contains important information about your rights and MidWest America's responsibilities under the Fair Credit Billing Act.

Notify MidWest America in Case of Errors or Questions About Your Statement

If you think your statement is wrong, or if you need more information about a transaction shown on it, you should write to MidWest America Federal Credit Union at the address listed on your statement, as soon as possible. We must hear from you no later than 60 days after we send you the first statement on which the error or problem appeared. You may telephone us, but doing so will not preserve your rights. In your letter, you will need to provide the following information:

1. Your name and account number.
2. The dollar amount of the suspected error.
3. A description of the error and an explanation, if you can, why you believe there is an error. If you need more information, you need to describe the item that you are not sure about.

Your Rights and Your Responsibilities After We Receive Your Written Notice

We must acknowledge your letter within 30 days, unless we have corrected the error by then. Within 90 days, we must either correct the error or explain why we believe the statement was correct.

After we receive your letter, we cannot try to collect any amount you question, or report you as delinquent. We can continue to bill you for the amount you question, including finance charges, and we can apply any unpaid amount against your credit limit. You do not have to pay any questioned amount while we are investigating, but you are still obligated to pay the parts of your statement that are not in question.

If we find that we made a mistake on your statement, you will not have to pay any finance charges related to any questioned amount. If we didn't make a mistake, you may have to pay finance charges and you will have to make up any missed payments on the questioned amount. In either case, we will send you a statement of the amount you owe and the date that it is due.

If you fail to pay the amount that we think you owe, we may report you as delinquent. However, if our explanation does not satisfy you and you write to us within ten days telling us that you still refuse to pay, we must tell anyone we report you to that you have a question about your statement. And, we must tell you the name of anyone who we reported you to. We must tell anyone we report you to that the matter has been settled between us when it finally is. If we don't follow these rules, we can't collect the first \$50 of the questioned amount, even if your statement was correct.