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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

CA: Scammers Exploit Census & COVID-19 to Rip Off Fla.



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Today is Census Day and Attorney General Ashley Moody is issuing a Consumer Alert to warn Floridians about scammers using COVID-19 and the mandatory count to steal personal information. An emerging scam involves a false claim that Floridians must respond to the 2020 Census in order to receive a coronavirus stimulus payment. The scam message usually includes a link that directs anyone who clicks on it to a fake website with prompts to provide sensitive personal information. While participating in the Census is mandatory, there is no connection between completing the Census and receiving a stimulus check.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “Scammers will try anything to steal from consumers, and with the stimulus payments on the way and a mandatory Census count underway, there is a perfect storm of fraud opportunities. Floridians need to stay informed about the Census count and educate themselves about the coronavirus stimulus package, so they will not be easily tricked by scammers trying use the news to make a dishonest dollar.”

To avoid Census and COVID-19 related scams, remember that the Census count and stimulus payment are not connected in anyway. Know that the Census Bureau will not send unsolicited emails, or ask for Social Security numbers, bank account or credit card information, or money. Never click on links on any unsolicited messages about the Census or stimulus payments, and confirm that the return address on mail from the Census Bureau is Jeffersonville, Indiana.

The Bureau does ask for some personal information, such as the full names and dates of birth for every household member. However, the Bureau will not ask questions about how much

money is in a bank account, passwords, Social Security numbers, mother's maiden name, work times or other questions that produce answers that might prove useful to identity thieves or cybercriminals.

For more tip on avoiding Census scams, click here.

Another type of scam to be aware of involves criminals who impersonate U.S. Census workers going door-to-door. The ultimate aim is to break into victims' houses to steal money, property or commit violent acts. Official Census Bureau employees will have badges and ID numbers that can be confirmed by calling 1(800) 923-8282.

This tactic has also been reported in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Several South Florida law enforcement agencies issued alerts about people dressed in white lab coats and masks impersonating Centers for Disease Control and Prevention workers. The imposters reportedly knocked on doors to offer free COVID-19 tests. The CDC is not sending people door-to-door to test for COVID-19. If a CDC impersonator shows up at your door, do not let them in. Close the door and call 911.

For more on tips to avoid COVID-19 related scams, click here.

Earlier this week, Attorney General Moody issued a Consumer Alert warning Floridians about scammers using the new coronavirus stimulus package to target Floridians. The $2 trillion federal stimulus package includes individual payments, expanded unemployment coverage, student loan changes and much more. News of the historic stimulus is providing ammo for scammers already trying to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic to rip off Floridians.

For more information, including a video about stimulus related scams, click here.

Anyone who encounters a coronavirus stimulus package scam or any other type of COVID-19 fraud should contact the Florida Attorney General's Office at 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or MyFloridaLegal.com.

To view previous Consumer Alerts about emerging COVID-19 related scams, click here.

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The Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division issues Consumer Alerts to inform Floridians of emerging scams, new methods used to commit fraud, increased reports of common scams, or any other deceptive practice. Consumer Alerts are designed to notify Floridians about scams and available refunds in an effort to prevent financial losses or other harm caused by deceptive practices. Anyone encountering a scam should report the incident to the Florida Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com. To view recent Consumer Alerts and for other information about avoiding scams, visit MyFloridaLegal.com/ConsumerAlert.