



Department of Justice

Office of the United States Attorney
Eastern District of California
U.S. Attorney McGregor W. Scott

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, April 2, 2020
www.justice.gov/edca

CONTACT: LAUREN HORWOOD
PHONE: 916-554-2706
usacae.edcapress@usdoj.gov

Federal Government Warns of Potential Fraud Scams Surrounding COVID-19 Economic Impact Payments

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of California and the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) is warning California taxpayers to be alert about possible scams relating to COVID-19 economic impact payments.

U.S. Attorney McGregor W. Scott and Kareem Carter, Special Agent in Charge IRS Criminal Investigation, made the announcement today in an effort to equip taxpayers to avoid being victimized by criminals who may view the recently approved payments as an opportunity to commit a crime.

“At a time when many Americans are struggling during this national emergency, others are plotting ways to get between the taxpayers in need and the payments that have been designed to help them. I urge all Californians to remain vigilant, especially those receiving the COVID-19 economic impact payment, and not fall prey to these scammers,” said U.S. Attorney Scott. “It is critical that suspicious calls and efforts are immediately reported to law enforcement.”

“As this deadly virus continues to impact every part of our lives, scammers are looking to take advantage of all the chaos,” said Special Agent in Charge Carter. “They will prey on our hopes and fears to steal your money, your personal information, or both.”

COVID-19 economic impact payments will be on their way in a matter of weeks. For most Americans, this will be a direct deposit into their bank account. Those who usually receive tax refunds via paper check will receive their economic impact payment in check form as well. Scammers may use various methods to trick recipients into signing over their checks or into giving their personal information that the scammer can use at a later date to file false tax returns in an identity theft scheme.

U.S. Attorney Scott and Special Agent in Charge Carter offer the following tips on how to spot a scam and information on how the COVID-19 related economic impact payments will be issued:

- The IRS will deposit your check into the direct deposit account you previously provided on your tax return. If you usually receive tax refunds through a paper check, IRS will send you a paper check.

- The IRS will not call and ask you to verify your payment details. Do not give out your bank account, debit account, or PayPal account information — even if someone claims it is necessary to get your check. **It's a scam.**
- If you receive a call, don't engage or talk with scammers or thieves, even if you want to tell them that you know it's a scam, or you think that you can beat them. **Just hang up.**
- If you receive texts or emails claiming that you can get your money faster by sending personal information or clicking on links, delete them. Do not click on any links in those texts or emails.
- Reports are also swirling about bogus checks. If you have already received or receive a check in the mail now, it's fraud — it will take the Treasury a few weeks to mail checks out. If you receive a check for an odd amount (especially one with cents), or a check that requires that you verify the check online or by calling a number, **it's fraud.**
- If you receive a request or instructions to sign over check, this is a scam.

Don't become a victim by allowing criminals to exploit your emotions. Stay strong and tell your family, friends and neighbors about these scams.

If you believe you have been a target or victim of a scam or fraud, please report it to the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via email at disaster@leo.gov.

For more information, visit the IRS website at www.irs.gov/coronavirus.

###