Covid-19 Related Scam/Fraud Information from MEMA and Maine State Police

During this COVID-19 pandemic, scammers, and price gougers are devising numerous methods for defrauding people. Scammers are aggressively creating fake addresses for their physical locations, fake social media accounts, and fake email addresses. Claims of available medical supplies or services are made and when monies are transacted the goods and services never arrive. Remember, any COVID-19 vaccine, cure, or treatment, will be made through main stream media outlets and not to calls to people’s homes.

Scammers, pretending to be doctors or hospital staff, have even tried calling to report treatment for a friend or relative and demand payment for that treatment. In addition, scammers are soliciting donations for individuals, groups, and areas affected by COVID-19. Scammers are calling and sending messages via social media about fraudulent investment opportunities, e.g., products or services of publicly traded can prevent, detect, or cure COVID-19, and that the stock of these companies will dramatically increase in value as a result. If you decide to invest, carefully research the investment beforehand.

Please remember to remind older people to be on the lookout for calls and emails from unknown sources, even if they claim to be from legitimate world or global health organizations. Many of these emails are designed to trick recipients into downloading malware or providing personal identifying and financial information. You should check the websites and email addresses offering information, products, or services related to COVID-19. Be aware that scammers often employ addresses different only slightly from those belonging to legitimate entities. For example, they might use “cdc.com” or “cdc.org” instead of “cdc.gov.”

Best advice is to (1) not click on links or open email attachments from unknown or unverified sources; (2) make sure you have up to date anti-malware and anti-virus software on your electronic devices and they are operating properly; (3) be wary of any business, charity, or individual requesting payments or donations in cash, by wire transfer, gift card, or through the mail; and (4) do not send money through any of these channels or provide any personal information, including but not limited to your account(s) information. If you ever have questions, it’s best to independently verify the identity of any company, charity, or individual that contacts you regarding COVID-19.

If you believe you’ve been scammed, file a complaint with the Maine Attorney General at consumer.mediation@Maine.gov or FederalTradeCommission@FTC.gov, or call 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4621. Law enforcement agencies around the world work together to stop scammers and provide consumers with the information they need to avoid fraud, so you can also call local law enforcement.