



Better Business Bureau News

Start With Trust

Serving Northwestern Ohio and Southeastern Michigan

VOLUME 101 NUMBER 2

Check your company business profile at bbb.org

February, 2020

Coronavirus Outbreak Brings Cyberscams!

Guess what? Cyber threat scammers are now leveraging worries over the **coronavirus** in order to conduct **financial fraud** and **disseminate malware**. The **Center for Internet Security** is warning that malicious actors are likely to post links to **fake charities** and **fraudulent websites** that solicit donations for relief efforts or deliver malware.

As of February 1, the **Center** observed the registration of names containing "coronavirus." The majority of new domains include a combination of the words "help," "relief," "victims," and "recover." Most appear currently under development. However, as a few appear malicious and the domains themselves appear suspect, these domains should be viewed with caution. More "coronavirus" domain registrations are likely to follow in the coming days.

These scams are similar to malware dissemination campaigns in response to previous high-profile events including Hurricane Harvey, the Boston Marathon bombing and the Royal Wedding.

Beware! Exercise caution before opening related emails, clicking links, visiting websites, or making donations to **coronavirus** relief efforts.

There are many more warnings. A scam identified by security firm **Trustwave Holdings** spreads false claims that the virus has spread to victims' home cities, then prompts users to enter their email passwords in order to read more information.



The potential of misinformation is high and users should verify information before trusting or reacting to posts seen on social media. Malicious actors often use **social media** to post false information or links to malicious websites. While the coronavirus outbreak constitutes a world health crisis, experts have warned against unnecessary panic, arguing that **misinformation** is causing an overblown response to the disease. If you click on links or open malicious attachments, you risk compromising your computer to scammers.



Face Mask Cons

The BBB has sent out a warning after seeing an uptick in **counterfeit goods** being sold in stores and online on sites like Amazon that are taking advantage of people's fears.

Face masks and **surgical masks**, in particular, are in high demand in light of the virus -- and many legitimate vendors have seen their products sold out.

The BBB alert said scammers are taking advantage of the high demand and low supply and are **selling low-quality or counterfeit masks**, or are just using it as a front to steal people's personal and credit card information.

Face masks may be the first phony product to crop up in the coronavirus outbreak, but it's likely not the last. During the **Ebola** outbreak, the promotion of **unapproved and fraudulent drugs and remedies** was so prevalent that the U.S. Government advised consumers to steer clear of them. We expect that scammers will use the coronavirus as another chance to market **products falsely claiming to cure the disease**.

The BBB reports that the **Centers for Disease Control** does **not recommend face masks** for the general public. **If you are still considering ordering masks**, evaluate any claims and buy them from a **seller you know and trust**. Always be careful with your personal information. Make sure the company is legitimate before handing over your name, address or credit card information.

The large number of purchases of face masks by the general public is causing real problems for medical professionals. **Doctors, dentists, health care professionals, hospitals and pharmacies** report trouble getting the masks, which are needed for treating patients. Many of the masks are purchased by Asian consumers to mail to relatives in China, Hong Kong and elsewhere.

(More on page 2)

How to Avoid Coronavirus Scams

The **Center for Internet Security** recommends that everyone follow these guidelines when reacting to news associated with the **coronavirus**, and solicitations for donations:

- Users should exercise extreme caution when responding to individual pleas for financial assistance such as those posted on social media, crowd funding websites, or in an email, even if it appears to originate from a trusted source.



- Be cautious of emails or websites that claim to provide information, pictures, and videos.
- Do not open unsolicited (spam) emails or click on the links or attachments in those emails.
- Never reveal personal or financial information in an email or to an untrusted website.
- Do not go to an untrusted or unfamiliar website to view the event or information regarding it.
- Malicious websites often imitate a legitimate website, but the URL may use a variation in spelling or a different domain (e.g., .com vs .org).

The Center recommends that technical administrators adhere to the following guidelines when reacting to and protecting their networks and users during high-profile events, including news associated with coronavirus:

- Warn users of the threats associated with scams, phishing, and malware associated with high-profile events and train users about social engineering attempts.
- Implement filters at your email gateway to filter out emails with known phishing attempt indicators and block suspicious IPs at your firewall.
- Flag emails from external sources with a warning banner.
- Implement DMARC-type programs to filter out spoofed emails.

BBB Company Reports Given

In 2018 – 1,146,854 reports given (Toledo and Lima) top 69 categories		
1	Remodeling Services	131,431
2	Tree, Landscape & Lawn Service	43,022
3	Roofing, Gutters & Chimney Svcs	42,768
4	Auto Repair, Paint & Service	41,500
5	Heating & Air Conditioning	36,133
6	Paving & Concrete Contractors	29,359
7	Home & Commercial Builders	26,086
8	Plumbing & Drain Cleaning Services	25,471
9	Manufacturers & Producers	22,519
10	Auto - Used Car Dealers	17,894
11	Electricians	16,162
12	Painting Contractors	14,234
13	Garage Doors & Openers	12,737
14	Collection Agencies	11,566
15	Attorneys & Legal Services	11,312
16	CPAs, Accounting & Tax Preparation	11,310
17	Auto - New Car Dealers	11,294
18	Advertising & Ad Specialties	10,263
19	Windows – Installation & Service	9,987
20	Home Furnishings - Retail	9,845
21	Kitchen & Bath Remodeling	9,831
22	Market Research & Analysis	9,500
23	Excavating Contractors	9,486
24	Insurance Companies	9,272
25	Realtors & Real Estate Investing	9,265
26	Restaurants	9,177
27	Banks & Credit Unions	7,850
28	Television - Cable, CATV & Satellite	7,821
30	Gold, Silver & Platinum Dealers	7,569
31	Cleaning Services	6,812
32	Veterinary & Pet Services	6,389
33	Home Inspection Services	5,943
34	Pest Control Services	5,846
35	Dentists	5,493
36	Nursing Homes & Assisted Living	5,285
37	Hotels & Resorts	5,251
38	Fire & Water Damage Restoration	5,188
39	Swimming Pool Contractors, Dealers	4,752
40	Carpet & Rug Dealers - New	4,751
41	Trucking Companies & Brokers	4,744
42	Home Health Services	4,731
43	Apartments	4,634
44	Online Retailer	4,484
45	Internet & Web Design Services	4,472
46	Carpet & Rug Cleaners	4,279
47	Computers - Service & Repair	4,277
48	Appliances - Dealers & Service	4,258
49	Jewelers - Retail	4,189
50	Fence Contractors	4,071
51	Auto Tire & Parts Dealers	3,893
52	Commercial Products Manufacturers	3,835
53	Movers - Household	3,619
54	Vacuum Cleaners - Dealers	3,539
55	Hospitals & Medical Services	3,535
56	Charities - Local	3,530
57	Secret Shopper Services	3,339
58	Building Materials	3,255
59	Rubbish & Garbage Removal	3,177
60	Motorcycle Sales & Service	3,140
61	Child Care Centers	3,003
62	Beauty Salons	2,822
63	Dog Breeders	2,581
64	Towing - Automotive	2,533
65	Fitness Centers	2,457
66	Chiropractors D.C.	2,343
67	Funeral Homes & Services	2,328
68	Consumer Finance & Loan	2,273
69	Dry Cleaners	2,187

POTPOURRI

By Dick Eppstein, BBB President

"These constant phone scammers! How much trouble can I get in if I cuss them out?"

* * * *

Our **Denise** recently spoke with a BBB Accredited **dog breeder** who shipped a puppy to a customer in Colorado after receiving confirmation from PayPal that payment was received; OK to ship. Puppy was shipped and received by customer. The shipping airline sent a received receipt with customers signature to breeder. In the meantime, puppy customer cancelled payment with credit card company and PayPal was not able to pay the breeder. Our Accredited Business has been working diligently to collect money owed for puppy with no results. This breeder has been scammed for \$3,100! As we tell the media, scammers are not *always* businesses!

* * * *

Hey, Did you see the new program from OFFICE DEPOT?

*Want to save money on office equipment and supplies? BBB Accredited Businesses have been offered a special discount arrangement with **Office Depot** which may really help cut your costs. It isn't the typical plan; this gives discounts versus Amazon and Wal-Mart! Use the E-Z signup form in this issue, set up a free account and give it a try.*

* * * *

"I got a phone call saying my wife has been dealing in drugs in Texas and they are going to freeze our Social Security assets and come and get her - when would be a good time. I said 'How 'bout tomorrow at 9am?!' I know it's a scam, but is it possible these goons might actually show up?"

Our Christine indicated it wasn't likely - but gave him the non-emergency number to the Police just in case.

* * * *

Keith from Lakeland Import Auto Service (Sandusky) called to report an AT&T scam.

"They said they were calling from the AT&T Upgrade Department (703 area code) and started fishing for information about our company. I called AT & T and they said they did not have an 'upgrade department.'"