

BBB Warns of Potential Scams Related to the COVID-19 Outbreak

(South Florida, March 20, 2020)—Better Business Bureau Serving Southeast Florida and the Caribbean (BBB) is advising the public to remain vigilant and exercise due diligence to avoid becoming victims of scams related to the COVID-19 outbreak. While the community is working together with government in order to avoid the spread of the virus, scammers see an opportunity to deceive people.

There are several scams related to Coronavirus that BBB has already seen or anticipates will be trending:

Fake Cures- several companies have promoted cures and remedies to help in the prevention of coronavirus via social media. At this time there is no vaccine for coronavirus or known prevention other than to remain indoors as much as possible.

Fake COVID-19 At-Home Test Kits- scammers are using robocalls to offer people free at-home COVID-19 test kits and asking them to pay for shipping or asking for their personal information. Don't fall for this, at-home test kits are not being offered yet. Always be wary of unsolicited phone calls.

Fake Emails, Texts and Calls from CDC or WHO- Phishing is present now more than ever, with so many communications consumers are receiving daily, scammers are taking advantage by mimicking emails, calls, or texts from legitimate organizations. They are impersonating the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) in an attempt to gain access to your personal information. Always check the recipient and keep your anti-virus updated. If you never signed up to receive communications from these organizations, report them as spam.

Fake Online Stores- Consumers have reported buying cleaning supplies and other high demand items such as face masks and hand sanitizer from online retailers that never delivered the items. Be very cautious when making these purchases online, anyone can set up an online store and receive payments. Unfortunately, many of these improvised stores are just looking to take your money and never had inventory to sell in the first place.

Fake Charities- in times of crisis the community always comes together to help, but beware of fake charities, always do an online search or BBB Wise Giving Alliance search at [give.org](https://www.give.org) before donating.

Door to Door Health Officials- Living communities in our area have reported the presence of people impersonating health officials who are offering COVID-19 testing and have entered homes to rob them. Don't let strangers in your home, no health officials are going to knock on your door.

Asking for Money or Personal information to receive government aid- Once the government aid for those affected due to COVID-19 becomes available there will be a legitimate way of applying for it. In the meantime, do not fall for calls or emails asking for money in advance or your social security number. Do not comply, the government will not ask you for this information over the phone or for money in order to give you aid.

Work from Home Scams- Employment scams have been on a steady rise in the past year and they will continue to trend and take advantage of all those people who are currently off work due to the quarantine. These jobs usually offer substantial amounts of money and benefits for effortless work or reshipping jobs. Do a thorough investigation of all companies who post jobs before providing personal information.

BBB has activated a site to keep consumers informed coronavirus on scams, how to avoid them and how to report them even if they haven't lost money, please visit bbb.org/coronavirus.

About the Better Business Bureau

For more than 100 years, the Better Business Bureau has been helping people find businesses, brands, and charities they can trust. In 2019, people turned to BBB more than 173 million times to get profiles on nearly 5.4 million businesses and reports from 11,000 charities, all available for free at bbb.org. There are local and independent BBBs in the United States, Canada and Mexico, including the BBB of the Southeast Florida and Caribbean Area, which was founded in 1964 and serves 11 counties in South Florida and the territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands For more information visit www.bbb.org/sefl

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