

FRAUD ALERT

December 2020

Potential Pandemic Imposters

Scam artists have been around since the beginning of time. These unscrupulous fraudsters are always finding new ways of attempting to trick you out of your money or personal information for their own selfish gain. They will play on your emotions, trust, and lack of knowledge. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided very fertile ground for these rip-off artists.

The Bucks County Consumer Protection/Weights & Measures department has received many notifications and calls from residents, that have been contacted during these trying times, by scam artists through email and telephone. In some cases, miracle cures that are unproven and untested are for sale and in other cases, if you pay upfront, you can be the first in line to get the vaccine when it is available. Bucks County Department of Health Director Dr. David Damsker wants residents to be aware that while contact tracers from his office may reach out to residents, if they may have been in contact with a COVID-19 positive patient, that they will NEVER ask for money. Any request for money in this scenario is a clear indicator of a scam. These scam phone calls should be promptly reported to the National Do Not Call list at www.donotcall.gov or by calling 1-888-382-1222.

We have heard many reports, from across the country, of phony testing sites popping up in vacant parking lots. The scam artist may appear very professional with tents and signage on the streets advertising “Quick COVID-19 Testing”. They resemble the legitimate sites that you may see on television of where to receive a COVID-19 test. These scam artists will take your personal information and your credit card information to pay. Needless to say, you are not really being tested for COVID-19. You may well find yourself in a much more likely scenario of exposure because safety protocols at these pop-up sites are almost certainly not followed. As expected, the scam artists are also trying to take advantage of people who wish to make charitable donations. For those who are able and have the desire to donate to a charity, you must make sure that it is a legitimate charity and that you are making your donation wisely. It is disheartening that these criminals would take advantage of situations like COVID-19 however, there are some things you can do to protect yourself, such as:

- Do not respond to ads for miracle treatments or cures for COVID-19. Instead, contact your own, local medical professional if you have questions about cures or treatments for COVID-19.
- Do not take advice from an unsolicited email or telephone call on this subject. (As a matter of fact, we suggest that you never take unsolicited phone calls or emails from people you do not know. Let your answering system do the work.)
- Be cautious of any pop-up testing location. Your medical professional should be able to refer you to a legitimate, local testing site or visit www.buckscounty.org/government/healthservices/HealthDepartment for a list of local testing sites.

If you are able and desire to give a monetary donation to a charity, you should always do your homework before giving. You can do this by checking websites such as [www.Charity Navigator.org](http://www.CharityNavigator.org) where you will find a charity's rating and financial information so that you can determine how much a particular charity spends on the cause and how much of their donation goes to overhead costs. A charity's rating and transparency are key.

Residents can call the Bucks County Crimes Against Older Adults Task Force for Senior Citizen assistance at 1-800-490-8505 or Bucks County Consumer Protection at 1-800-942-2669 for general questions.

Monthly Fraud Alerts brought to you by:

Bucks County Crimes Against Older Adults Task Force	
Bucks County District Attorney's Office: 215-348-6344	Senior Law Center: 610-910-0210
Bucks County Area Agency on Aging: 267-880-5700	Bucks County Office of Consumer Protection: 215-348-6060
Bucks County Coroner's Office: 215-348-3852	Bucks County Register of Wills: 215-348-6265
Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA): 1-800-675-6900	US Dept. of Health and Human Services/OIG: 1-800-447-8477
www.buckscounty.org/CrimesAgainstOlderAdults 24 - HOUR HOTLINE: 1-800-490-8505	