

Economic Stimulus Package Scams

A warning from the Minneapolis Police Department

With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the so called "Obama Stimulus Package"), there has been a huge increase in fraud and identity theft scams. People are claiming to offer free government grant money and using other come-ons, to bilk money from unwary victims. We recently received a complaint about a women standing on a street corner with a sign claiming that she could help people access this money. We are not currently aware of any victims of this type of fraud. This alert is simply information that might help you avoid becoming a victim of this crime.

According to Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson, "Scam artists are trying to profit from the federal economic stimulus legislation by sending bogus emails [and making other forms of contact] to citizens claiming that they are entitled to federal stimulus dollars if they give out their bank account or private information."

How The Scam Works: *'The federal economic stimulus legislation provides financial resources to government agencies for construction projects and other programs. It does not provide for direct payments to individual citizens.* Scam artists, however, are attempting to take advantage of the turmoil in the economy by misleading citizens into believing that they are eligible for federal stimulus payments. The promise of federal stimulus money in exchange for a fee or for providing private information is always a scam. Do not respond to any email, phone call, or mailing promising you federal stimulus money. And never give out banking, credit card, or private information to a stranger.'

Tips To Avoid Stimulus Scams

- 🛡️ Never provide bank account, credit card, or private information to a stranger or in response to an email. Neither the government nor your bank will ever ask you to reply to an email by providing private banking information.
- 🛡️ Never pay money or give out private information to anyone promising that you'll receive federal stimulus money or a federal grant. You'll send the money, and the criminal will take it and run.
- 🛡️ Don't be fooled by emails, mailings, or phone calls that appear to come from government agencies or that use official words like "federal," "Congressional," "presidential," "stimulus package," etc. With today's modern technology, it is cheap and easy to generate an email, website, or mailing that looks official but is really from a crook.

This link will take you to the Minnesota Attorney Generals website where more information is available about this type of fraud.

<http://www.ag.state.mn.us/Consumer/Publications/FederalStimulusScams.asp>

If you would like more information about crime prevention, help in organizing a block club, or a National Night Out event, contact Crime Prevention Specialist Don Greeley at 673-3482 or at donald.greeley@minneapolismn.gov

