



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

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Consumer Alert: UIA Warns of Imposter Unemployment Claims *Criminals attempting to illegally obtain benefits using stolen and falsified data*

LANSING, MICH. The Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) today warned residents of attempts by criminals to file imposter claims in pursuit of benefits. The U.S. Secret Service (USSS) [recently issued a national alert](#) regarding an international criminal ring exploiting the COVID-19 crisis to commit largescale fraud against state unemployment programs. The UIA, Michigan State Police Cyber Command and Dept. of Technology Management and Budget Cybersecurity are coordinating with the USSS to obtain cyber threat indicators related to national fraud activity. No personal data from claimants has been stolen from the UIA.

Imposter claims are filed using previously stolen or fraudulent personal information. The expanded benefits available under the newly created federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program has resulted in increased activity among criminals particularly those posing as self-employed workers or independent contractors to illegally obtain benefits. The USSS has indicated that states already targeted include Washington, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Oklahoma, Wyoming and Florida.

Using information from federal and state law enforcement, the UIA has developed additional fraud protections, including additional requirements to verify identity and authenticate claim eligibility. These changes could impact both new and existing claimants but are made using the latest understanding of how criminals are gaining access to benefits. Some existing claimants may have received "Stop Payment" notices on their accounts and have been sent instructions on how to submit the additional information. Certain financial institutions may also place a hold on a customer's account if it believes there is suspicious activity. Customers should contact their institution directly if this occurs.

"There is a rise in unlawful unemployment claims across the nation and unfortunately criminals are taking advantage of this global pandemic. Michiganders who suspect an imposter claim has been filed in their name should contact the UIA immediately," said UIA Director Steve Gray. "We are working with law enforcement to identify and prevent scammers from accessing the system and will work to ensure all unemployment benefits are sent to the Michigan workers that deserve them."

The UIA continues to work with law enforcement to determine the level of unlawful unemployment activity in Michigan. When the UIA becomes aware of potentially malicious claims, it takes quick action to temporarily suspend certain payments to prevent fraud. The UIA will continue to work with its partners, which also include the USSS, U.S. Office of Inspector General and U.S. Attorney's Office to identify,

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locate and begin to bring these criminals to justice.

Imposter Claims: Individuals use stolen or false personal information to fraudulently apply for unemployment benefits. [Tips to prevent unemployment identity theft can be found online](#). No personal data from claimants has been stolen from the UIA.

How to protect against unemployment identity theft:

When an individual files a claim for unemployment insurance, they will receive a written Monetary Determination letter. If you receive this letter (Form UIA 1575C) and you have not applied for unemployment benefits, or the name on the form is not yours, you may be a victim of identity theft. If this happens, contact the UIA immediately online at [Michigan.gov/UIA](https://michigan.gov/UIA) through the Report Identity Theft link. [More tips on how to prevent unemployment identity theft in Michigan are available online](#).

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://michigan.gov/Coronavirus) and [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/Coronavirus).

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