

Be Alert! Watch out for Scam Artists During COVID-19

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There are so many unanswered concerns surrounding COVID-19 as it spreads all over the United States. Attention is focused on the spread of the virus, which leaves gaps for scam artists to operate. Kentucky farmers and businesses should be on alert, watching out for the sneaky, quiet and harmful scam artists who operate “like a fox.” Scam artists look for easy prey, especially during a disaster.

Scam artists are opportunists who capitalize off the fears and chaos surrounding disasters. They cunningly set up fake websites and use emails to sell counterfeit products or promised services to individuals. They utilize social media posts, blogs and texts as fake baits to fish out personal information in order to take money and sell or use personal information.

Be aware of certain information sent to you via email and Facebook that attempts to draw a response from you. Messages could include enticing information advertising free business loans or sharing false information detailing extreme losses of people within your county. They will use known health organizations’ names to set up fake emails to appear legitimate, but may have vicious malware attachments to the email. Scammers are good at soliciting donations in attempt to get bank routing numbers and your personal information by calling it relief help.

Here are some helpful tips to stay alert from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC):

- Avoid opening unfamiliar links you do not know. Make sure your anti-malware and anti-virus software is up to date.
- If you receive new information about the coronavirus, you can check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) websites. All updates and information will be listed on their sites.



- Disregard ads or offers for treatment, vaccinations or new prevention equipment for treatment for the coronavirus.
- Do not release your personal or banking information without doing your homework.
- Do background checks before you make donation. If you are asked for cash by PayPal, money order, check or any other form, delete the message and contact information immediately.
- Watch out for so-called amazing “investment opportunities” involving stock opportunities for coronavirus medication, cures, equipment or companies. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) warns everyone about such offers.

Note, foxes are tenacious and smart predators by nature, and so are scammers when trying to seize their prey. Fear and chaos empower them to prey upon anything not protected, gated or secured. You must stay on guard and high alert during this time of disaster. Be alert and watch out for scamming foxes who are after your personal information!

If you need additional information on how to protect yourself from scammers and their latest sly fox tricks, go to the Federal Trade Commission consumer information website to keep up with the most recently discovered scams.

Sources

<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/scam-alerts>
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