

Inspector General Warns Public About New Social Security Benefit Suspension Scam

The Inspector General of Social Security, Gail S. Ennis, is warning the public about fraudulent letters threatening suspension of Social Security benefits due to COVID-19 or coronavirus-related office closures. The Social Security Administration (SSA) will not suspend or discontinue benefits because their offices are closed.

The Social Security Office of the Inspector General has received reports that Social Security beneficiaries have received letters through the U.S. Mail stating their payments will be suspended or discontinued unless they call a phone number referenced in the letter. Scammers may then mislead beneficiaries into providing personal information or payment via retail gift cards, wire transfers, internet currency, or by mailing cash, to maintain regular benefit payments during this period of COVID-19 office closures.

As of Tuesday, March 17, 2020, local SSA offices are closed to the public due to COVID-19 concerns; however, Social Security employees continue to work. Social Security will not suspend or decrease Social Security benefit payments or Supplemental Security Income payments due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Any communication you receive that says SSA will do so is a scam, whether you receive it by letter, text, email, or phone call.

Social Security will never:

- Threaten you with benefit suspension, arrest, or other legal action unless you pay a fine or fee;
- Promise a benefit increase or other assistance in exchange for payment;
- Require payment by retail gift card, cash wire transfer, internet currency, or prepaid debit card;
- Demand secrecy from you in handling a Social Security-related problem; or
- Send officials letter or reports containing personally identifiable information via mail.

If you received a letter, text, call or email that you believe to be suspicious, about an alleged problem with your Social Security number, account, or payments, hang up or do not respond. We encourage you to report Social Security scams using our dedicated online for at <https://oig.ssa.gov>. Please share this information with your friends and family, to help spread awareness about Social Security scams.

For more information, please visit <https://oig.ssa.gov/scam>. Members of the press may make inquiries to Social Security OIG at oig.dcom@ssa.gov