

Fraud Advisory

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<http://oig.ssa.gov>

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Inspector General Warns Public about Text Phishing Scheme Targeting Disability Applicants and Beneficiaries

Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr., Inspector General for the Social Security Administration (SSA), is warning the public, and Social Security disability applicants and beneficiaries in particular, about a text phishing scheme that has recently surfaced. Disability law offices in the Greater St. Louis area and Michigan have reported several of their clients have recently received suspicious text messages, requesting them to call a telephone number for information about their Social Security disability benefit claims.

According to these reports, individuals posing as Government officials have sent texts to several Social Security disability applicants and beneficiaries in an attempt to elicit a response—possibly to obtain their personal and financial information.

The text reads: "*Disability Alert: Please call 253-xxx-xxxx regarding your recent disability benefits application.*"

Inspector General O'Carroll urges everyone to be aware that Social Security will never send you an unsolicited text message about your application for Social Security benefits. Moreover, you should always take precautions when asked to provide personal information. Mr. O'Carroll stated, "You should never provide your Social Security number, bank account numbers, or other personal information unless you are extremely confident about the identity of the person asking for it. Social Security representatives may call to follow up on a benefit application—but they will not send unsolicited text messages—and they generally will not ask for personal identifiers or financial information."

Please be aware that there are many variations of this type of phishing scheme, which could lead to identity theft or Social Security benefit theft. For more information on identity theft, please [click here](#). You may also contact the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov/idtheft or 1-877-ID-THEFT for additional information or to report identity theft.

If you receive a text message, e-mail, or phone call from anyone claiming to be from a government agency and requesting personal information, Mr. O'Carroll recommends that you contact the agency directly to verify the employee's identity. For the Social Security Administration, you may contact your local Social Security office, or call Social Security's toll-free customer service number at 1-800-772-1213, to verify the employee's identity and the information request. (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can call Social Security's TTY number at 1-800-325-0778.)

Also, you may report suspicious activity involving Social Security programs and operations to the Social Security Fraud Hotline at <http://oig.ssa.gov/report>, or by phone at 1-800-269-0271, 10 am to 4 pm Eastern Time. (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may call TTY 1-866-501-2101.)

For more information, please contact Tracy Lyng, Communications Director, at (410) 965-2671.