

Fraud Advisory

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<http://oig.ssa.gov>

Social Engineering Scams Target Social Security Beneficiaries

The Inspector General for the Social Security Administration (SSA) is warning the public, and Social Security beneficiaries in particular, to be aware of fraud scams that target personal information. Scammers use phone calls, emails, and other methods to obtain personal information, then use it to commit identity theft.

In the most recent scam, identity thieves pose as Government officials in an attempt to convince you to provide personal and financial information. They may claim to be SSA employees—or FEMA employees, in the wake of Hurricane Sandy—and ask for Social Security numbers and bank information to “make sure” that you can receive your benefits. Scammers may also claim that you have won a lottery or other prize, but you must send money to pay “fees,” “taxes,” or other expenses before you can claim your winnings.

Once the thieves have your personal information, they can use it to open credit accounts, buy homes, claim tax refunds, and commit other types of fraud. Most recently, some identity thieves have redirected Social Security beneficiaries’ monthly benefit payments, so the money goes to a different bank account, sometimes repeatedly. Some of these scams involve pre-paid debit cards instead of traditional bank accounts.

To help prevent this type of fraud, the Inspector General recommends that you:

- **never** provide your personal information when receiving unsolicited calls or contacts
- **never** agree to accept pre-paid debit cards or credit cards in another person’s name
- **never** agree to send or wire money to an unknown person
- **always** contact your local SSA office if you receive a call from a person claiming to be from SSA, and that person asks you to provide your Social Security number or other information.

If you find that someone has stolen or is using your personal information, you should report that to the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov/idtheft or 1-877-ID-THEFT. You can report suspicious activity involving Social Security programs and operations to the Social Security [Fraud Hotline](#), or by phone at 1-800-269-0271. Deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals can call OIG’s TTY number at 1-866-501-2101.

For more information, please visit <http://oig.ssa.gov/newsroom> and follow the SSA OIG on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). For information about your Social Security benefits, contact your local Social Security office or visit www.socialsecurity.gov.