

City of Simonton

From: "Texas Attorney General" <webmaster@texasattorneygeneral.gov>
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Subject: News Release: Senior Alert: Identity Thieves Impersonate Medicare Employees to Target Senior Texans

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senior Alert: Identity Thieves Impersonate Medicare Employees to Target Senior Texans

State authorities are warning senior citizens to be wary of identity thieves who are posing as Medicare officials in an attempt to steal seniors' sensitive personal information.

According to recent complaints received by the Texas Attorney General's Office, identity thieves are calling senior Texans seniors at home and claiming to be affiliated with the federal Medicare program. The callers falsely tell seniors that the Medicare program's current identification cards – which are well known for the red, white and blue stripes across the top – are being phased out and that replacement Medicare cards must be obtained in order to continue receiving benefits.

The callers' plan to steal the identities of their victims soon becomes clear when seniors are told they must confirm their Medicare number and bank account information over the phone in order to receive a replacement card. Since a senior's Medicare number is identical to his or her Social Security number, the caller's request to "confirm" a Medicare number is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to steal the unsuspecting senior's sensitive personal information.

Fortunately, a few wary senior Texans immediately questioned the callers' request. But increasingly savvy identity thieves are prepared and attempt to create the false impression that they already have the senior's personal information. As proof, the callers often repeat some of the call recipient's personal information such as name, address and telephone number. But because this information is easy to obtain, the caller's verification effort is actually just a devious ruse that attempts to mimic the practices of legitimate enterprises – like a bank or insurance company – in an effort to steal the call recipient's Social Security and bank account number.

The best way to avoid any version of this telephone identity theft scam is to keep in mind that major federal agencies like the Internal Revenue Service and Medicare program never call Americans offering to provide services. These agencies communicate by U.S. mail – and never have their employees randomly call to confirm anyone's personal information.

So to avoid being scammed, follow this rule: Never provide personal information to any unsolicited telephone callers. And when in doubt, just hang up the phone.

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