



CONSUMER ALERT: Government Imposter Scammers

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has received reports from Wisconsin consumers, businesses, and government entities targeted by scammers who impersonate local government entities and officials. The scammers are attempting to deceive individuals, businesses, and other organizations into wiring them money for fake tax bills and other fees, such as building permits or zoning submissions.

These government imposters are making contact with targets via email and text messages. The messages appear to be convincing, sometimes impersonating specific individuals within government and using official government logos, street addresses, and titles. They are being sent by an email address that seems legitimate. The messages provide well-written details and include fraudulent instructions to wire money to the “government entity.” However, any payment would be sent to the scammer.

Scammers often try to instill a sense of urgency to act in an attempt to obtain a target’s personal identification or banking information. They may ask potential victims to immediately wire money to avoid late fees, fines, legal action or even arrest.

If a consumer or organization is contacted by a scammer impersonating government entities, there are steps they can take to prevent this scam:

- **Use verified contact information for local government entities, officials, and utility providers.** Contact information can be verified by checking past communications, notices, or bills from the entity that can be confirmed are valid.
- **Be suspicious of unfamiliar or unexpected contacts.** Do not provide personal or confidential business information in response to a suspicious request.
- **Pause before acting on any suspicious emails, texts, or letters.** Delete these messages instead of following their instructions or opening any links or attachments. To report a message to DATCP, screenshot or print a copy instead of forwarding it via email.
- **If you receive a call, hang up as soon as something does not seem right.** Avoid providing information to unknown callers. Instead, verify the real government entity’s contact information and make an outgoing call to that verified phone number.
- **Verify bills and invoices.** Confirm requests come from legitimate businesses, government entities, or utility providers before paying.

Wisconsin consumers and organizations should also carefully examine any unexpected invoices or advertisements they receive by mail, as some scammers use this practice in hopes the target will find a written letter more trustworthy and send payment before they realize the request is fraudulent.

Organizational staff who receive suspicious messages related to their organization’s finances should notify their organization’s IT department, finance department, and/or management to confirm whether it is legitimate. To report a scam or to file a complaint with DATCP, visit DATCP’s Consumer Protection webpage at ConsumerProtection.wi.gov or contact the Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 422-7128 or DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov.

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