

Don't fall for a coronavirus hoax

Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers warns everyone to watch out for scams like these that have emerged since the COVID-19 outbreak began a few weeks ago.

- **Duct cleaning companies** offering services or “special” filters to protect from COVID-19.
- **Utility companies** threatening to disconnect power for non-payment.
- Fraudsters claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or the World Health Organization (WHO) selling **fake lists** of COVID-19 infected people living near you.
- Offers of **fake COVID-19 tests, which are only administered by health authorities.**
- Public Health Agency of Canada allegedly **asking for your health card and credit card numbers** for a COVID-19 prescription.
- Charities like the Red Cross offering **free medical products (e.g. masks) for a donation.**
- People selling household **decontamination services** door to door.
- **Fake shops, websites, social media accounts and email addresses** – offers of masks and other medical supplies for sale have sprung up online. Unsuspecting victims who order from fraudulent ones never get their goods and see their money disappear.
- **Impersonating legitimate companies** - using similar names, websites, email addresses and messages on social media platforms. This sometimes includes the **World Health Organization (WHO).**
- **Fake charity appeals** - attempts to get the recipient's money allegedly to fund vaccine for children in China. There is no vaccine yet for the novel coronavirus.
- **Telephone fraud** – Interpol says criminals may call pretending to be clinic or hospital officials and claim that a relative of the victim has the virus and needs money for medical treatment.
- **Phishing** – emails claiming to be from national or global health authorities ask victims to provide financial details, or open an attachment containing malware.

An Ounce of Prevention - here are some additional tips from Interpol for those shopping online:

- Be wary of unsolicited emails offering medical equipment or requesting your personal information for medical checks. Legitimate health authorities do not contact the general public in this manner.
- Be aware of bogus websites – criminals will often use a web address which looks almost identical to a legitimate one, e.g. “abc.org” instead of “abc.com”.
- Check out online reviews of a company before making a purchase.
- Be wary if asked to make a payment to a bank account located in a different country than where the company is located.
- If you believe you have been the victim of fraud, alert your bank immediately so the payment can be stopped.

Visit us online at www.solvecrime.ca

(Sources: Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers, Canadian Fraud Centre, Interpol, World Health Organization)