

U.S. Attorney Establishes COVID-19 Fraud Hotline

By Administrator
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RALEIGH— Robert J. Higdon, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina urged the public to report suspected fraud schemes related to COVID-19 (the Coronavirus) by calling the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) hotline (1-866-720-5721) or by sending an e-mail to disaster@leo.gov .

In coordination with the Department of Justice, Attorney General William Barr has directed U.S. Attorneys to prioritize the investigation and prosecution of Coronavirus fraud schemes.

“As our health care professionals and first responders work tirelessly to defeat COVID-19, we can be certain that criminals will attempt to profit from the fears of the public and will take advantage of this dangerous pandemic for their personal gain. The Department of Justice is committed to detecting, investigating, and aggressively prosecuting those who commit this wrongdoing. As we fight to address COVID-19 related fraud that is unfortunately emerging across the country – we want to raise awareness and forewarn those who might otherwise fall victim to these scams,” said United States Attorney Higdon.

Some examples of these schemes include:

- Individuals and businesses selling fake cures for COVID-19 online and engaging in other forms of fraud.
- Phishing emails from entities posing as the World Health Organization or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Malicious websites and apps that appear to share Coronavirus-related information to gain and lock access to your devices until payment is received.
- Seeking donations fraudulently for illegitimate or non-existent charitable organizations.

- Medical providers obtaining patient information for COVID-19 testing and then using that information to fraudulently bill for other tests and procedures.

In a memorandum to U.S. Attorneys issued March 19, Deputy Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen also directed each U.S. Attorney to appoint a Coronavirus Fraud Coordinator to serve as the legal counsel for the federal judicial district on matters relating to the Coronavirus, direct the prosecution of Coronavirus-related crimes, and to conduct outreach and awareness activities. The Eastern District of North Carolina’s Fraud Coordinator is Assistant United States Attorney Ethan Ontjes.

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The NCDF can receive and enter complaints into a centralized system that can be accessed by all U.S. Attorneys, as well as Justice Department litigating and law enforcement components to identify, investigate and prosecute fraud schemes. The NCDF coordinates complaints with 16 additional federal law enforcement agencies, as well as state Attorneys General and local authorities.

[.justice.gov/coronavirus](https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus) .