

Better Business Bureau Alert

BBB ALERT! SOCIAL SECURITY IS NOT CALLING YOU!

To All BBB Accredited Businesses. This is an alert we sent out to TV, radio and newspapers throughout our BBB 24 county service area:

Consumers are getting slammed with fake phone calls from overseas criminals claiming to be the Social Security Administration. The calls go something like this:

“This is the Social Security office. Your Social Security number has been compromised. The number has been used in a crime and it has been deactivated. If you are receiving Social Security benefits, they have been suspended. You must call us back immediately or a warrant may be issued for your arrest. You must call one of our agents back immediately.”

The caller ID on phones often show area codes 623, 631, 443 or they may show “unknown”. None of these phone numbers are legitimate; they are “spoofed” and we believe the callers may be foreign, possibly from India or Pakistan.

The latest large volume of these scam calls appear to be received in Lenawee County, Michigan; however consumers throughout our BBB 24-county service area of Ohio and Michigan also report receiving them constantly.

Consumers who return the call are immediately asked for personal information, and to “verify their Social Security number” – giving it to the crooks. Often they are told that, to avoid legal prosecution, they need to buy a gift card or cash card at a local store, often for \$100 or more, and give the card numbers to the “agent.”

Victims who fall for this scam may be called repeatedly and asked again for more money. Why the Social Security would need a gift card payment makes no sense.

The criminals who make these calls concentrate on senior citizens. The majority of victims of such phone scams are 65 or older; but consumers of almost any age might fall for this racket.

BBB emphasizes to all consumers; Social Security does not call. The idea that a SSN can be “deactivated” is ridiculous; but these callers are so aggressive that they can terrorize victims and trick them into giving out personal information or send money.

Consumers who receive these calls can report them on BBB Scam Tracker. Victims who have lost money can report it to the FBI web site IC3 (Internet Crime Complaint Center). Most important, BBB urges anyone receiving these calls to just hang up and do not call them back or give them any personal information or money.

Dick Eppstein, BBB