



Police Department

MEDIA RELEASE PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Congress has recently passed a large COVID-19 relief and stimulus package. As with other aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, fraudsters are exploiting the relief and stimulus to victimize the public. The U.S. Secret Service is observing a rise in stimulus relief fraud over the past several days and expect the fraud attempts to continue throughout the pandemic.

Criminal actors are using a variety of means to contact potential victims. In one instance, the criminal actors are using spoofed email addresses posing as U.S. Treasury officials requesting that the victim provide personal identifying information (PII), so that they can receive their share of the stimulus.

Other than via email, criminal actors are contacting potential victims via SMS/text, robocalls, and other messaging platforms. Through texts, criminal actors are sending links which directs individuals to a website, which then prompts the potential victim to enter PII and other sensitive information, such as bank account numbers, email addresses, and passwords.

Foreign partners are also seeing an uptick in COVID-19 stimulus relief fraud. The U.S. Secret Service anticipates instances of similar fraud affecting U.S. citizens in the coming weeks. The method is the same- a potential victim will receive a text message directing them to a link. Once they reach the link, they are prompted to enter a variety of PII data.

The U.S. Secret Service stresses that individuals seeking information about the stimulus/relief program to contact the specific government agency via its website for guidance. Individuals should follow protocols published by those government websites. During this time, it is stressed that the public maintain an increased vigilance when providing any PII or other privileged and protected information.

Please remember these simple rules for the stimulus package:

- You do not have to apply for the stimulus
- The Government already has your information via tax returns
- The Government will NEVER call, email or text and ask for your personal information or for you to verify your personal information
- DO NOT SEND MONEY IN EXCHANGE FOR THE PROMISE OF MONEY
- When in doubt use the guidelines above to verify

The Rome Police Department is here to serve you and keep you safe. Please follow all recommended CDC and local guidelines. Together we can keep our community safe.