

SCAM ARTISTS CAPITALIZING ON CORONAVIRUS FEARS

SOME SCAMMERS ARE EVEN PHONING PEOPLE TO TELL THEM THEY HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR THE VIRUS

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As many citizens are hunkering down to help prevent the spread of coronavirus-related disease, one group has stepped up its activities: fraud artists.

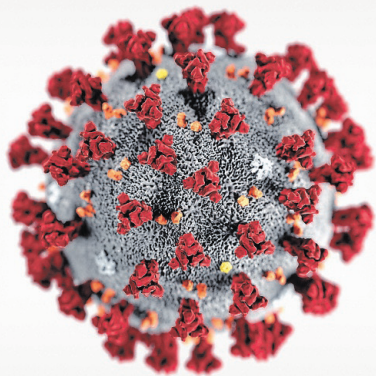
That's the word from the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, which warned this week scams designed to take advantage of fears surrounding the spread of COVID-19 are cropping up across the country.

"Fraudsters want to profit from consumers' fears, uncertainties and misinformation. Fraudsters are exploiting the crisis to facilitate fraud and cyber-crime," the centre said in an alert posted to its website.

The scams range from callers claiming to represent cleaning and heating companies offering special virus-resistant air filters to supposed financial advisers with tips on "hot new stocks related to the disease," the centre reported.

Some scammers are even phoning people to tell them they have tested positive for the virus, a phishing attempt to obtain health and credit card data. Police have also received reports of door-to-door canvassers offering household decontamination devices, authorities said.

The federal anti-fraud centre is warning people to be wary of unsolicited calls from people claiming to represent government or health agencies, or who say



Alissa Eckert photo

This illustration, created at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reveals ultrastructural morphology exhibited by coronaviruses. A novel coronavirus virus was identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China last year.

they can offer products that provide protection from COVID-19 — including "miracle cures" such as herbal remedies, vaccinations or faster testing for the virus.

It's also possible people may be targeted by fraudsters claiming to represent charities.

"Don't be pressured into making a donation," the centre warned, adding, "Verify that a charity is registered" before donating.

There is also a risk consumers may encounter fake or misleading ads related to COVID-19.

Scams reported to the Anti-Fraud Centre include:

- Cleaning or heating companies offering duct cleaning services or filters to protect from COVID-19;
- Local and provincial hydro/electrical power companies threatening to disconnect power for non-payment;
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the World Health Organization offering fake lists for sale of COVID-19 infected people in your neighbourhood;
- Public Health Agency

of Canada giving false results saying you have tested positive for COVID-19 and tricking you into confirming your health card and credit card numbers for a prescription;

• Red Cross and other known charities offering free medical products such as masks for a donation;

• Government departments sending out coronavirus-themed phishing emails, tricking recipients into opening malicious attachments, or seeking sensitive personal and financial details;

• Financial advisers pressuring people to invest in hot new stocks related to the disease or offering financial aid and/or loans to assist people during shut downs;

• Door-to-door sales people selling household decontamination services, and

• Private companies offering fast COVID-19 tests for sale.

If you have been a victim of fraud, contact your local police or file an online report at <https://www.anti-fraudcentre-centreanti-fraude.ca/report-signalez-eng.htm>.

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