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## COUNTY WARNS RESIDENTS ABOUT COVID-19 SCAMS

Agencies throughout Ashtabula County have been working together throughout this emergency and have asked me to warn our residents of potential scams surrounding the current COVID-19 crisis.

Law enforcement is already reporting an increase in the number of email, text message and social media scams designed to prey on your fear or take advantage of your kind heart.

The Federal Trade Commission has made the following suggestions to keep you from getting scammed:

- Hang up on robocalls. Don't press any numbers. Scammers are using robocalls to pitch everything from scam Coronavirus treatments to work-at-home schemes. The recording might say that pressing a number will let you speak to a live operator or remove you from their call list, but it might lead to more robocalls, instead.
- Don't respond to texts and emails about checks from the government. The details are still being worked out. Anyone who tells you they can get you the money now is a scammer.
- Ignore online offers for vaccinations and home test kits. There are no vaccines, pills, potions, lotions, lozenges or other prescription or over-the-counter products available to treat or cure COVID-19. At this time, there also are no FDA-authorized home test kits for the Coronavirus. Visit the FDA to learn more.
- Beware of emails or texts that seem to be from quarantined friends and family asking you to send money.
- Never respond to a text or email that asks for your birthdate, social security number or password.
- Know who you're buying from. Online sellers may claim to have in-demand products, like cleaning, household, and health and medical supplies when, in fact, they don't.
- Don't click on links from sources you don't know. They could download viruses onto your computer or device.
- Watch for emails claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or experts saying they have information about the virus. They are not actually from the CDC. For the most up-to-date information about the

Coronavirus, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) or Ohio's website, [Coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://www.coronavirus.ohio.gov)

- Fact-check information before you repost or forward it. Scammers, and sometimes well-meaning people, share information that hasn't been verified. Before you pass on any messages, contact trusted sources like the three listed above.
- Avoid clicking on unknown link or pop-ups and never download a suspicious email attachment. It could contain malicious software designed to steal your personal information.
- Do your homework when it comes to online or telephone donation requests. Don't let anyone rush you into making a donation. If someone wants donations in cash, by gift card, or by wiring money, don't do it.

If you think that you or someone you know has been the victim of a scam, contact the Ohio Attorney General's Office at [www.OhioProtects.org](http://www.OhioProtects.org) or call 1-800-282-0515. You can also report potential scams to the Federal Trade Commission at [ftc.gov/coronavirus](http://ftc.gov/coronavirus).

Be smart and stay safe.

***Cecilia M. Cooper***

Ashtabula County Prosecutor