WV Executive Branch Privacy Tip

Social Security Fraud Alert

This week's tip is a fraud alert from the US Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General.

FRAUD ADVISORY: Inspector General Warns Public About SSA Employee Impersonation Scheme

July 19, 2017

The Acting Inspector General of Social Security, Gale Stallworth Stone, is warning citizens about a new Social Security Administration (SSA) employee impersonation scheme. SSA and its Office of the Inspector General (OIG) have recently alerted citizens about an OIG employee impersonation scheme and a scheme targeting former clients of Kentucky disability attorney Eric Conn; the agencies are now receiving reports from citizens across the country about other phone calls from an individual posing as an SSA employee. The caller attempts to acquire personally identifiable information from victims to then edit the victims' direct deposit, address, and telephone information with SSA.

The reports indicate that the impersonator calls from a telephone number with a 323 area code. The caller claims to be an SSA employee, and in some instances, tells the victim that they are due a 1.7 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase of their Social Security benefits. The impersonator goes on to ask the victim to verify all of their personal information including their name, date of birth, Social Security number (SSN), parents' names, etc. to receive the increase. If the impersonator is successful in acquiring this information, they use it to contact SSA and request changes to the victim's direct deposit, address, and telephone information.

SSA employees occasionally contact citizens by telephone for customer-service purposes. In only a few limited special situations, usually already known to the citizen, an SSA employee may request the citizen confirm personal information over the phone. If a person receives a suspicious call from someone alleging to be from SSA, citizens may report that information to the OIG at 1-800-269-0271 or online via https://oig.ssa.gov/report.

Acting Inspector General Stone continues to warn citizens to be cautious, and to avoid providing information such as your SSN or bank account numbers to unknown persons over the phone or internet unless you are certain of who is receiving it. "You must be very confident that the source is the correct business party, and your information will be secure after you release it," Stone said.

If a person has questions about any communication—email, letter, text or phone call—that claims to be from SSA or the OIG, please contact your local Social Security office, or call Social Security's toll-free customer service number at 1-800-772-1213, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, to verify its legitimacy. (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can call Social Security's TTY number at 1-800-325-0778.)

For more information, please contact Andrew Cannarsa, OIG's Communications Director, at (410) 965-2671.