



## **Beware COVID-19 Scams Spreading Like a Virus**

An emergency like the spread of the COVID-19 can cause our community to react in many positive ways as we look to find things that we can do to help our neighbors and to help to shorten the duration of the crisis.

Unfortunately, a general emergency also sends criminals scrambling to develop ways to defraud the community, preying on the part of the population who may be vulnerable due to age or a lack of understanding concerning technology and the Internet.

Scams may take several forms.

▶ It may come as a knock at the door with one or two people offering services or claiming to represent organizations like the Red Cross or Panhandle Health.

▶ It may come as a phone call from someone claiming to be collecting information for your insurance or to process your “stimulus check.”

▶ It may come as an email seeking your personal or financial information or including an official looking link to a phony website.

▶ It may come through a social media message, again with a fraudulent link.

Regardless of how it comes, the goal of all these methods is the same – to access your information and to relieve you of your money. Even more insidious are those hackers who just want to plant viruses in your Internet-linked devices to spread and cause chaos through your email address book.

The Federal Communications Commission is tracking scams related to COVID-19 and advises the following:

▶ Do not respond to calls or texts from unknown numbers, or any others that appear suspicious.

▶ Never share your personal or financial information via email, text messages, or over the phone.

▶ Be cautious if you're being pressured to share any information or make a payment immediately.

▶ Scammers often spoof phone numbers to trick you into answering or responding. Remember that government agencies will never call you to ask for personal information or money.

▶ Do not click any links in a text message. If a friend sends you a text with a suspicious link that seems out of character, call them to make sure they weren't hacked.

▶ Always check on a charity (for example, by calling or looking at its actual website) before donating.



## CITY OF COEUR D'ALENE

---

CITY HALL, 710 E. MULLAN

COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO 83814

It is sometimes difficult to be cautious when our nature wants to make everything positive – when we want to be helpers. In this situation the best thing we can do is help ourselves, to be vigilant.

More information on preventing scams and fraud can be found at:

[www.fcc.gov/covid-scams](http://www.fcc.gov/covid-scams)

[www.ag.idaho.gov/consumer-protection](http://www.ag.idaho.gov/consumer-protection)

[www.justice.gov/usao-wdva/covid-19-fraud](http://www.justice.gov/usao-wdva/covid-19-fraud)

For the latest information on the coronavirus visit the Panhandle Health District website:

<http://panhandlehealthdistrict.org/covid-19/>.