Social Security Direct Deposit Scam

Identity theft is taking on a fresh look in a popular new scam. Identity thieves are contacting the Social Security Administration to have the direct deposit of your Social Security benefits routed to the fraudster’s own bank account. In order for this scam to work, a fraudster must have your personal information, including your Social Security number and bank account numbers.

Fraudsters are creative and can find many ways to get this information. You should be extremely cautious if you receive any calls or emails asking you to verify your bank account number or Social Security number. You should never give this information to anyone who has contacted you out of the blue, regardless of who they claim to work for.

One popular way fraudsters ask for this information is by claiming that they represent your credit card company. They may call or email you claiming that they are updating their records, and they just need you to confirm your account numbers for their system. Legitimate credit card companies rarely do this sort of thing. Official communications will be sent by mail. If you receive this type of call out of the blue, you should end the conversation immediately and call your credit card company’s customer service department to verify the story.

Another scam involves a fraudster asking for your bank account information in order to directly deposit a large cash prize into your account. These lottery and sweepstakes scams are very popular, but you should stop and ask yourself some basic questions. Did you enter to play the contest that they are claiming you have won? You cannot win a contest or lottery that you did not enter. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn’t real.

You can prevent anyone from tampering with your Social Security account by contacting the Social Security Administration and requesting that all account changes must be made in person. You can also contact the Social Security Administration inspector general at their website (oig.ssa.gov) for more information or to report fraud.

For more information on consumer fraud and scams, including helpful preventative tips and contact information for other community resources, contact Stetson University College of Law’s Elder Consumer Protection Program by e-mail at elderconsumers@law.stetson.edu, or by telephone at (727) 562-7888.