



Phone and Text Messaging Scams

As we are all trying to adapt to the challenges of COVID-19, be aware that fraudsters are putting a new spin on their old tricks. In this day and age, most people connect with family, friends, work and pay bills through their phones. The fraudsters have also adapted by connecting with potential victims by phoning and sending text messages. The phone calls and text messages are similar in context and can include scams such as offering free gifts, refunds or making demand for immediate payment. In order to carry out their scam, the fraudster tries to convince you that they are a legit company and in some cases will hide their identity on caller ID so to appear from trusted places like, government agencies, phone/internet companies or utility companies. In some circumstances, the fraudster can become more demanding and may utter veiled threats if you refuse payment such as being arrested. Sadly, this trend is far too common and if it has happened to you, know that you are not alone.

In April 2020, Canadians made 12,900 reports of fraud to the Canadian Anti Fraud Centre and the Better Business Bureau, an increase of 9,000 reports from the same month and year prior. The likely increase in reports may be attributed to fraudsters taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic. By being aware of these statistics it is important to know you can protect yourself against being a victim of fraud by Recognizing, Rejecting and Reporting these scams.

Common Phone and Text Messaging Scams:

CERB Cheque Scam – A text message alerts a customer indicating that the recipient has received a deposit for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit and directs you to click an attached link.

Utility Services or Phone/Internet Company Scam – A customer receives a text message form indicating they are receiving a refund and provides an attached link.

Caller ID Spoofing Scam – The caller deliberately disguises their phone number to appear on caller ID in order to hide their identity. The caller does this to trick you into believing they are a legit company.

Protect Yourself from Phone and Text Messaging Scams:

- **HANG UP** the phone right away if you get a suspicious call. Do not follow the prompts.
- **DO NOT** respond to the calls or text messages to unknown or suspicious phone numbers. Research the company contact information independently and call the company to confirm.
- **DO NOT** click on attached links. They may lead you to fake websites.
- **DO NOT** give out your personal or financial information through the phone or text messages.
- **DO NOT** respond to robocallers prompting you to push a number to be placed on a “Do not call list”.
- Utility or Phone/Internet Companies generally do not collect credit card or bank account information over the phone, by email or by text.
- No government agency or bank will threaten to arrest you.
- No government agencies will request payment in Bitcoin, iTunes cards, gift cards or interact e-Transfers.



When to Contact the Police

If you are a victim of fraud in which you have incurred a financial loss and/or given out your personal information, call your local police to report the incident. Record details of your interaction with the fraudster including phone numbers, email addresses and communication with the scammer. Photographs or screenshots of the messages are helpful. If you have **not** been a victim of a fraud but have information related to scams, please report this to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre through the website or email at info@antifraudcentre.ca and forward the spam message to 7726 (SPAM).

Helpful Links

Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre - <https://www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca/features-vedette/2020/telephone-telephonique-eng.htm>

Government of Canada - <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/security/protect-yourself-against-fraud.html>

Consumer Protection BC - <https://www.consumerprotectionbc.ca/2018/03/receive-spam-text/>

Caller Smart - <https://www.callersmart.com/articles/18/caller-id-spoofing-how-scammers-use-local-and-trusted-numbers-to-trick-you>

CBC/RCMP – <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/spoofing-rcmp-scams-1.5354827>

BBB - <https://www.bbb.org/article/news-releases/16670-a-new-kind-of-phone-scam-neighbor-spoofing>