

Protect yourself from scams and fraudulent schemes.

Key Message:
Protect yourself from
cybercrime.

Audience:
General consumer
and retired people

Form Number:
AR09756 (02/25)

SMRU Approval:
5029554
(exp. 02/21/28)

Word Count:
650

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has a list of 20 common fraud schemes on its "Scams and Safety"¹ web page, including credit card theft. The thief makes small purchases with your stolen credit card number and sees if they go through, if they do, then they hit your account for bigger purchases. You should have an email, text message, or phone alert set up with your credit card company, so that the bank will contact you if there are any unusual spending items, if there are illegitimate charges, you must report to the bank as soon as possible so you won't be charged for those items. The bank will lock your account and send you a new card in the mail. This can be frustrating when you have set up monthly withdrawals to be charged against your card. You'll have to go to those companies' websites and change the card numbers you use for those charges.

How to protect yourself from Internet scams and fraudulent schemes.

The FBI says protect your computer² by keeping systems and software up to date and install a strong reputable anti-virus program. Also, You will pay a yearly fee for antivirus, antispyware, and firewall software services, but the safety they provide makes it well worth the cost. Be careful when connecting to a public Wi-Fi network and create a strong and unique passphrase for each online account you hold and change them regularly. If you've been the victim of a scam, file a complaint with your local/state police department's cybercrime unit and file a complaint with the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3).³

Forewarned is forearmed.

The more you know about e-scams and fraudulent schemes, the safer you will feel. Another way to protect yourself is by regularly visiting the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC's)⁴ website for updated information and warnings. Its function is to protect America's consumers by educating and taking consumer complaints on everything from identity theft to unwanted telemarketing solicitations by phone or by email. It runs the National Do Not Call Registry,⁵ which you should sign up for. Once you are on the do-not-call list for at least 31 days, the calls/emails should stop, and if they don't then you can file a complaint with the FTC.

You can register each phone number that you have, and your registration won't expire. You can check the FTC's website if your phone number is still registered.⁵ Remember, it's not OK for companies to leave recorded voicemails on your phone, so you can file a complaint if you receive unwanted telemarketing robocalls. Once you are registered on the do-not-call list, it's illegal for those telemarketers to continue to call you. Use your common sense. If you don't recognize the area code or the phone number on your caller ID, chances are it's a telemarketing call. Don't answer it, or if you do, insist that they take you off their call list.

To keep up to date on current scams that are plaguing consumers, the FTC has an email alert system that you can sign up for.⁶

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Sources:

¹ "Scams and Safety—Common Scams and Crimes," Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
<https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/safety-resources/scams-and-safety/common-scams-and-crimes> <https://www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/common-scams-and-crimes>

² "Scams and Safety—On the Internet," Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
<https://www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/on-the-internet>

³ FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3). <https://www.ic3.gov/>

⁴ "Filing a Complaint," Federal Trade Commission (FTC).
<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/media-resources/identity-theft-and-data-security/filing-complaint>

⁵ "National Do Not Call Registry," Federal Trade Commission (FTC).
<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0108-national-do-not-call-registry>

⁶ "Most Recent Scam Alerts," Federal Trade Commission (FTC).
<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/scam-alerts>