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THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR PREVENTS CYBER CRIMINALS FROM STEALING MORE THAN \$12 BILLION IN UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Using New High-Tech Tools and Strategies the NYS DOL Office of Special Investigations has Identified Over 1 Million Fraudulent Claims

The NYS DOL Offers Tips to New Yorkers on How to Protect Themselves Against Fraud and Help Stop Cyber Criminals in Their Tracks

Since the Beginning of the Pandemic, New York State has Paid Over \$81.3 Billion in Unemployment Benefits to Over 4.6 Million New Yorkers

The New York State Department of Labor today announced that it has identified over 1.1 Million fraudulent unemployment benefit claims during the COVID-19 pandemic, preventing fraudsters from stealing more than \$12.3 billion in benefits. The NYS DOL continues to work aggressively to identify and prevent unemployment compensation fraud and continues to partner with law enforcement on the federal, state, and local level, including the US DOL Office of Inspector General, the Secret Service, and the FBI, to hold fraudsters accountable.

The NYS DOL is also warning New Yorkers to remain vigilant and only respond to official communications sent by the New York State Department of Labor. The alert comes in the wake of widespread reports of fraudsters using fake communications such as phishing texts and

emails seeking personal information from claimants presumably, in many instances, to file fraudulent unemployment compensation claims or for other nefarious purposes.

“Our Office of Special Investigations is aggressively deploying advanced resources, from artificial intelligence, to tools like ID.me, to fight this fraud,” said New York State Department of Commissioner Roberta Reardon.

“While our investigators are always one step ahead of stopping these criminals who are attempting to steal unemployment benefits that provide a lifeline to New Yorkers, we also need the public’s help in reporting anything that looks suspicious. We are urging them to refer to the tips in this release to protect themselves against fraud and to help us in our efforts to catch these fraudsters.”

How to Report Fraud

If New Yorkers receive an official communication from the NYS DOL regarding unemployment benefits that they did not apply for, they may be a victim of fraud and identity theft. Official communication includes, but is not limited to, emails, text messages, letters, debit cards, and tax forms received in the mail. They should immediately report suspected UI fraud to the NYS DOL at on.ny.gov/uifraud, and suspected identity theft to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). <https://www.identitytheft.gov/>. After reporting suspected fraud through the NYS DOL’s online form, individuals will receive an email confirmation that the NYS DOL has received the report. NYS DOL will only call the individual if our Office of Special Investigations needs more information about the reported fraud.

Once a report is filed, the NYS DOL **immediately** shuts down the fraudulent claim and no more benefits are paid. The NYS DOL uses a number of strategies to stop most fraud before the first dollar is paid.

Even after reporting fraud, it is very likely that individuals may receive additional mail, emails, text messages, and/or a debit card after the report has been filed. Fraudsters will often use multiple variations of the same address and names to file these bogus claims. The multiple pieces of mail are generated by the NYS DOL as a **gatekeeping mechanism**. The NYS DOL is required to generate letters for each claim filed while eligibility is

determined. These letters may include requests to verify information, which the fraudster is unable to do, and thus these letters provide another means to flag illegitimate claims. **While fraudulent claims are stopped immediately, the communication, printing, and mailing process may continue for weeks or months later.** Individuals **do not** need to send a report for each piece of communication received.

The NYS DOL began using a trusted identity verification vendor call ID.me. ID.me is used by more than twenty states for identity verification for unemployment benefit programs, and by several federal agencies as well. NYS DOL has referred more than 500,000 potentially fraudulent claims to ID.me, which has confirmed that over 95% of those claims were in fact fraudulent. In addition to catching fraudsters before claims are payed, ID.me is a deterrent, stopping fraudsters from submitting their claim at all. More information on ID.me is available [here](#).

How to Protect Your Personal Information

The NYS DOL is also reminding New Yorkers to be alert in protecting their personal information as some fraudsters are posing as the NYS DOL through fraudulent emails, text messages, and social media accounts to prey on New Yorkers.

The NYS DOL does use emails, text messages and social media to communicate with existing claimants and individuals legitimately seeking to apply for unemployment benefits throughout the Unemployment Insurance (UI) application process and benefit period. However, New Yorkers should watch out for SMSing attempts where fraudsters use text messages to lure them into calling back a fraudulent phone number, visiting fraudulent websites, or downloading malicious content via phone or web.

If New Yorkers get a text from a 10-digit phone number claiming to be NYS DOL **it's a scam** and they should delete it immediately. Texts from the NYS DOL will **ONLY** come from 468311 or 22751. Texts like the ones found [here](#) are NOT from the NYS DOL.

Additionally, New York State will not text claimants asking for your driver's

license information or asking claimants to confirm driver's license information. If someone asks for this information or claims to be a DOL agent over text, New Yorkers should block that number and alert the NYS DOL.

The NYS DOL also uses email to provide updates, allow claimants to certify for backdated benefits, provide reemployment services, and more. To avoid becoming a victim of fraud, claimants should always double-check the email address from all emails they receive. If an email appears fraudulent, it may be. New Yorkers should look out for misspellings, suspicious links, and unusual messaging. If they are unsure if an email is from us, they should reach out to the NYS DOL to confirm. All messages from the NYS DOL sent via DocuSign will be **ONLY** be sent via dse@docusign.net.

Verified NYS DOL Social Media Accounts

The NYS DOL also uses social media to provide updates and answer questions. However, claimants should NEVER give their Social Security number over social media. The NYS DOL agents and chatbots will never ask for this information through social media.

New Yorkers should confirm they are interacting with our verified social media accounts before providing any information. They should block and report any other accounts that follow or interact with them and purport to be the NYS DOL. The only verified social media accounts associated with the NYS DOL are the following:

- Twitter: [com/nyslabor](#)
 - Facebook: [com/nyslabor](#)
 - Instagram: [com/nyslabor](#)
 - LinkedIn: [com/company/nyslabor](#)
 - YouTube: [com/nyslabor](#)
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NYS DOL Tips and Resources

The NYS DOL launched a public education campaign including a Public Service Announcement, social media posts, and emails, and throughout the pandemic has been educating the public about potential fraud and providing tips to avoid falling victim to evolving scams.

For more tips on how to avoid becoming a victim of fraud, report unemployment fraud, employer fraud, and identity theft, or to know if a communication comes from NYS DOL, New Yorkers can visit our website at: <https://dol.ny.gov/report-fraud>

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