

Senior Insights

April 2020

Inspector General Warns Public About New Social Security Benefit Suspension Scam

The Inspector General of Social Security, Gail S. Ennis, is warning the public about fraudulent letters threatening suspension of Social Security benefits due to COVID-19 or coronavirus-related office closures. The Social Security Administration (SSA) will not suspend or discontinue benefits because their offices are closed.

The Social Security Office of the Inspector General has received reports that Social Security beneficiaries have received letters through the U.S. Mail stating their payments will be suspended or discontinued unless they call a phone number referenced in the letter. Scammers may then mislead beneficiaries into providing personal information or payment via retail gift cards, wire transfers, internet currency, or by mailing cash, to maintain regular benefit payments during this period of COVID-19 office closures.

As of Tuesday, March 17, 2020, local SSA offices are closed to the public due to COVID-19 concerns; however, Social Security employees continue to work. Social Security will not suspend or decrease Social Security benefit payments or Supplemental Security Income payments due to the current COVID19 pandemic. Any communication you receive that says SSA will do so is a scam, whether you receive it by letter, text, email, or phone call.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Permian Basin Aging Advisory Council Meetings are held at 10:00am on the following dates:

May 27, August 19,
November 18

at the Permian Basin Regional
Planning Commission

Social Security will never:

- threaten you with benefit suspension, arrest, or other legal action unless you pay a fine or fee;
- promise a benefit increase or other assistance in exchange for payment;
- require payment by retail gift card, cash, wire transfer, internet currency, or prepaid debit card;
- demand secrecy from you in handling a Social Security-related problem; or
- send official letters or reports containing personally identifiable information via email.

If you receive a letter, text, call or email that you believe to be suspicious, about an alleged problem with your Social Security number, account, or payments, hang up or do not respond. We encourage you to report Social Security scams using our dedicated online form, at <https://oig.ssa.gov>. Please share this information with your friends and family, to help spread awareness about Social Security scams.

For further information, contact a Benefits Counselor at the Area Agency on Aging of the Permian Basin at (432) 563-1061 or 1-800-491-4936.

