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UNITED STATES ATTORNEY MICHAEL BAILEY AND IRS WARN OF SCHEMES TIED TO ECONOMIC IMPACT PAYMENTS

PHOENIX, Ariz. – The United States Attorney’s Office for the District of Arizona and the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) today urged citizens to be on high alert for scams related to the COVID-19 economic impact payments.

According to the United States Treasury Department, more than 80 million taxpayers who opted for direct deposit should see the economic impact payments in their bank accounts by tomorrow, if the payment has not already arrived. Coinciding with these payments, United States Attorney Michael Bailey and Tara Sullivan, Acting Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the IRS-CI Phoenix Field Office, expect a surge in scam calls, emails, and text messages as criminals try to leverage the payout as an opportunity to defraud individuals.

“Our office is on the lookout for scam artists who try to steal these much-needed economic impact payments from the pockets of our citizens,” said U.S. Attorney Michael Bailey. “We are on high alert for anyone who tries to prey upon Arizonans during this pandemic, and we ask that each of you take the same approach – educate yourself about common scams, be vigilant in protecting your information, and report any attempted fraud.”

U.S. Attorney Michael Bailey and Acting SAC Tara Sullivan also remind retirees who do not normally file a tax return that no further action is needed to receive the \$1,200 economic impact payment. The IRS will not contact retirees to request additional information via email, text, call, or in-person to issue an economic impact payment. The IRS is sending the economic impact payment automatically to retirees and no further action is required to receive it. Any contact asking for information regarding an economic impact payment should be considered suspicious. If contacted, retirees should hang up the phone, ignore the email, or shut the door, and report the scam to the IRS or the National Center for Disaster Fraud hotline.

“As soon as the Economic Impact Payments were announced by the government, we saw efforts from scammers trying to get their hands on this money. The IRS or Treasury will not be contacting

you to verify your personal information. We don't want any Arizonans to be victims of fraud related to these payments," said Acting SAC Tara Sullivan.

The United States Attorney's Office and the IRS-CI suggest the following tips to protect against economic impact payment scams:

1. Don't provide personal or banking information in response to any call, email, text, or social media request. If you do not file taxes and you are not a retiree, then you should provide your information to the IRS to register for an economic impact payment, but only do so by using the secure portal on [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov).
2. Never sign your economic impact payment check over to someone you don't know and trust.
3. Don't believe anyone who says they can help you get your economic impact payment faster. Be patient. Look for updates on [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov).
4. Be wary of emails, texts, or calls that emphasize the phrases "Stimulus Check" or "Stimulus Payment." The official term that is used by the IRS is economic impact payment.
5. If you expect your economic impact payment to come via mail, be mindful of thieves who may take this as an opportunity to raid your mailbox. Check your mail regularly and in a timely fashion.
6. If you receive an economic impact payment in the form of a physical check and someone calls you or asks you to verify information online in order to cash it, don't believe them. Bring the check to a bank teller for verification – don't provide that information to an unknown person, even if they claim to be from the government.

If you believe you were the target or victim of a scam related to the economic impact payments, please contact the IRS via phishing@irs.gov or the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline: 866-720-5721 or disaster@leo.gov.

More information about the economic impact payments can be found on the [Coronavirus Tax Relief](https://www.irs.gov) page on [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov). If you are a registered taxpayer who elected for direct deposit and you have not received a payment by the end of the week, visit [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) to determine the status of your payment. If you are a retiree and don't file taxes, no further action is required to receive your payment. If you are not a retiree and don't file taxes, enter your information as a non-filer through the secure portal at [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) to determine your eligibility and register for a payment.

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