

HEALTHCARE FRAUD

Sgt. Foster Mayo

You are probably just like me. I get phone scam calls virtually every day, sometimes multiple calls a day. The callers purport to be with the IRS, credit card companies, or online pharmacies.

I don't include solicitations from *alleged* firefighter, veteran's group, or law enforcement groups as *necessarily* a scam call but I do know that the solicitor that you are talking to gets a huge chunk of your contribution up front. And in 36 years of full-time law enforcement I have never known any officer or department that has received anything from such groups.

I just say "No, I don't contribute to phone solicitations." Usually the solicitor gets pushy so I say 'No" again but with an exclamation point instead of a period, followed by a dial tone.

The Officers of the Bonners Ferry Police Department long ago formed a non-profit association that will accept donations and estate items including weapons which can be used or traded for more specific tools for the department's mission. Not only are you getting a tax donation benefit but you are directly aiding your police department and not some phone solicitor.

Let's talk about online pharmacies and health insurance scams. We all know that most of the online pharmacies that solicit are not U.S. based companies. There is a reason that your caller has such a heavy accent, he or she is calling from (usually) a Pacific rim country such as the Philippines. To be sure it is someplace that DOESN'T answer to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. In other words, you have no way to know what you are getting, in what dosage or how contaminated.

Scammers may be offering expensive drugs at severely discounted prices or alleged medical equipment at little or no cost. All they want is your Medicare card number or credit card number. You may or may not receive any product or equipment but will have contributed to the multi-million-dollar Medicare fraud problem.

Never sign blank insurance claim forms. Ask your provider what they will charge and what you are expected to pay out of pocket. Do NOT buy from

pharmacies that do not require a valid prescription from YOUR doctor. Check to see if the pharmacy is licensed. Go to <https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers>. Be wary of businesses not using a legitimate street address in the U.S. Often it is actually a package facility or 're-shipping' facility.

IF IT'S TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, it probably is. Who wants or needs unknown drugs that may or may not be the drug(s) specified with possibly potentially dangerous or lethal side effects.

What to do. If you have been the victim of an online scam, file an online report with the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov or call the FBI directly. If you suspect health insurance fraud call your insurance company. Most have a toll-free number to report fraud. For Medicare fraud call 1-800-447-8477.

PROTECT YOURSELF.

