



Scam Alert

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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<https://oig.ssa.gov>

Media Inquiries: (410) 965-2671

Inspector General Warns of Newest Imposter Scam Tactic *Scammers Use SSA Letterhead to Deceive about Benefit Increases*

Gail S. Ennis, the Inspector General for the Social Security Administration (SSA), is advising the public about the latest development involving Social Security-related scams that use fraudulent SSA letterhead to feign legitimacy and gain trust to target individuals for money or personal information.

Scammers are using U.S. mail delivery to send fraudulent letters, advising the recipient to call a toll-free number to activate an increase in SSA benefits, such as a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). The letters appear to be from an SSA official and are designed to look like real SSA letterhead; however, they are not from SSA.

Inspector General Ennis is reminding the public that the COLA is automatic for all SSA beneficiaries and does not require activation. Beneficiaries can view their COLA notice online through their personal *my Social Security* account at <https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/>.

Inspector General Ennis [previously warned](#) about scammers using the real names of SSA and OIG officials—many of which are publicly available on the Internet. Common tactics include scammers citing “badge numbers” of law enforcement officers, sending emails with attachments containing real personal information about a fake “investigation,” or phishing for personal information by texting links to click on and “learn more” about a Social Security-related problem.

Recognizing the signs of a scam can help you avoid falling victim to one. It’s a scam if someone:

- Threatens to **suspend your Social Security number**
- Warns of **arrest or legal action**
- Demands **immediate payment**
- Requires payment by **gift card, prepaid debit card, Internet currency, or by mailing cash**
- Pressures you for **personal information (date of birth, SSN or bank account number)**
- Requests **secrecy**
- Threatens to **seize your bank account**

Members of the press may make inquiries to Social Security OIG at oig.dcom@ssa.gov or (410) 965-2671.

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- Promises to **increase your Social Security benefit**
- Tries to gain your trust by providing **fake “documentation” or false “evidence”**
- Makes demands and threats, or requests immediate action.

“Social Security will never threaten, scare, or pressure you to take an immediate action,” Inspector General Ennis said. “If you receive a suspicious call, text message, email, or letter hang up immediately or ignore the message. Visit ssa.gov and contact SSA directly if you have ongoing business to resolve.”

Inspector General Ennis also advises that if you owe money to Social Security, SSA will mail you a letter with payment options and appeal rights. SSA will also send a letter to notify beneficiaries about the COLA; however, it is automatic and does not require activation.

Visit our website <https://oig.ssa.gov> to report Social Security-related scams. Our [scam awareness page](#) provides more information about scams and past alerts. Follow SSA OIG on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for the latest information.

Please share this information with your friends and family to help protect them from Social Security-related scams.

Members of the public are encouraged to report suspected Social Security fraud to the OIG at <https://oig.ssa.gov>.

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