



Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

## Fraud Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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<http://oig.ssa.gov>

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### **Social Security Inspector General Warns Public About Hurricane Sandy Phone Scheme**

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, Social Security beneficiaries have again become the intended targets of an identity theft scheme. Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr., Inspector General for the Social Security Administration (SSA), is warning citizens about the scheme, which surfaced most recently in Rhode Island.

Inspector General O'Carroll urges all citizens to take precautions when asked for personal information. "You should never provide your Social Security number, bank account numbers, or other personal information unless you are extremely confident about the identity of the person to whom you are providing the information. Social Security representatives generally will not make unsolicited calls and request personal information. They already have access to that information in Social Security records."

In the Rhode Island incident, a woman received a call from a person claiming to be from the Social Security Administration. The caller informed her that her husband's Social Security payments would be delayed for several months due to computer damage caused by Hurricane Sandy—unless she provided her husband's Social Security number over the phone. Fortunately, the woman did not disclose the information. Instead, she hung up and reported the incident.

There are many variations of this type of scheme, which could lead to bank fraud or other types of identity theft. You can read more about identity theft [here](#) and [here](#). If you find that someone has stolen your personal information, you should contact the Federal Trade Commission at [www.ftc.gov/idtheft](http://www.ftc.gov/idtheft) or 1-877-ID-THEFT.

If you have doubts about the identity of an individual who claims to be from SSA or requests personal information, the Inspector General recommends contacting your local Social Security office, or calling Social Security's toll-free customer service number at 1-800-772-1213, to verify the legitimacy of the employee and/or the request. (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can call Social Security's TTY number at 1-800-325-0778.)

Individuals may report suspicious activity involving Social Security programs and operations to the Social Security [Fraud Hotline](#), or by phone at 1-800-269-0271. (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can call OIG's TTY number at 1-866-501-2101.)

*For more information, please contact Jonathan Lasher, SSA OIG's Assistant Inspector General for External Relations, at (410) 965-2671.*