



Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Fraud Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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<http://oig.ssa.gov>

Contact: Tracy Lynge

Phone: (410) 965-2671

Identity Theft Scheme Continues to Target Social Security Benefits through Unauthorized Direct Deposit Changes

Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr., Inspector General for the Social Security Administration (SSA), is warning Social Security beneficiaries about a new scheme involving deceptive post cards alerting them to unauthorized access of their **my Social Security** accounts and possible theft of their benefit payments.

Identity thieves who gain access to Social Security beneficiaries' personal information have, in limited instances, been able to create fraudulent **my Social Security** accounts or gain unauthorized access to existing accounts. They can use these accounts to make unauthorized changes to beneficiaries' direct deposit information, redirecting monthly benefit payments to a different bank account or a debit card.

We recently received reports that some Social Security retirement beneficiaries in Maine who became victims of this identity theft scheme have received official-looking post cards in the mail alerting them to the fraud scheme, and asking them to call toll-free (877) 411-6118 to correct their information.

The Inspector General is warning Social Security beneficiaries that these post cards **are not from Social Security** or any official representative of the U.S. Government. This is a new, extremely deceptive practice by the identity thieves to delay victims from reporting the fraud to Social Security. Any victims who receive the post card and call the listed phone number may also be providing additional personal information that an identity thief can use for other fraudulent purposes.

Inspector General O'Carroll urges all Social Security beneficiaries to create **my Social Security** accounts and monitor them regularly, through www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount; and to contact SSA immediately if they do not receive a payment or otherwise suspect unauthorized changes to Social Security's records. "If you receive any suspicious communications—mailers, emails, phone calls—please contact Social Security directly to verify the source," said Mr. O'Carroll.

To contact SSA, you may call toll-free (800) 772-1213, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday to speak to a Social Security representative, or visit a local Social Security office. (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can call TTY (800) 325-0778.) For Direct Express® card questions, please call (888) 741-1115 (deaf and hard-of-hearing cardholders should use (866) 569-0447).

You may report suspected fraud within Social Security programs and operations to the Social Security Fraud Hotline at <http://oig.ssa.gov/report>, or by phone at (800) 269-0271, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may call TTY (866) 501-2101.)

For more information, please contact Tracy Lynge, OIG Communications Director, at (410) 965-2671.