**Social Security Column**

DEFENDING AGAINST SCAMMERS WHO TARGET YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

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Scammers are always finding new ways to steal your money and personal information. The best way to defeat scammers is to know how to identify scams and to ignore suspicious calls and emails.

One common tactic scammers use is posing as federal agents or other law enforcement officials. They may claim your Social Security number (SSN) is linked to a crime. They may even threaten to arrest you if you do not follow their instructions. Here are three things you should do:

1. Hang up right away or do not reply to the email.
2. Never give personal information or payment of any kind.
3. Report the scam at [oig.ssa.gov](https://oig.ssa.gov/?utm_source=mip0222&utm_medium=online-media&utm_campaign=ocomm-mip-22&utm_content=defend-against-scammers-who-target-your-social-security-benefits-001) to immediately notify the law enforcement team in our Office of the Inspector General.

You should continue to remain vigilant if you receive a phone call from someone who claims there’s a problem with your SSN or your benefits. If you owe money to us, we will mail you a letter explaining your rights, payment options, and information about appealing.

When trying to identify if a call or email is a scam, **remember we will never:**

* Threaten you with benefit suspension, arrest, or other legal action.
* Promise a benefit increase or other assistance in exchange for payment.
* Require payment by retail gift card, cash, wire transfer, internet currency, or prepaid debit card.
* Demand secrecy from you in handling a Social Security-related problem.
* Send official letters or reports containing personally identifiable information via email.

For more information on scams please visit [www.ssa.gov/scam](https://www.ssa.gov/scam/). Please share this information with anyone who may need it.

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