

NEWS FROM SCDC

South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DEPARTMENT WARNS CONSUMERS TO BE WARY OF SCAMS ON TWITTER

Columbia, SC..... The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs warns consumers to be vigilant of scams circulating on Twitter.

Historically, from the telegraph to e-mail, con artists have quickly adapted to advancements in communication technology. Thus, it comes as no surprise that they are now targeting social networking sites such as Twitter.

Twitter is a micro blogging tool that allows users to post, in 140 characters or less, what they are doing. Scammers are utilizing the site in the same way they use spam e-mail to try to entice users.

Easy Money

These scams have been around for years in various incarnations, such as work-at-home scams, pyramid schemes, and timeshare fraud. The bottom line is the same – you lose money. Scammers post promises that you can make thousands of dollars doing little or no work. A link is included in the post, directing you to a website that has more information on this “great opportunity.” This is never legitimate. **No one is ever going to post on Twitter a legal way for you to make thousands of dollars.**

Phishing

In most of these schemes a user posts a link to a website masquerading as a legitimate website. The spoofed site uses any information you enter to steal your identity, hack into financial accounts, and generally wreak havoc.

About the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs:

Established by the Consumer Protection code in 1974, The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs represents the interests of South Carolina Consumers.

Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education.

For more information, visit www.sconsumer.gov.

One scam, specific to Twitter, involves receiving a spoofed e-mail made to appear it is from Twitter. The e-mail usually claims you need to click on an accompanying link to see a “funny” post or “great site.” The link takes you to a site spoofing Twitter’s homepage. Once you login, the scammer has your user name and password, giving them access to your account and the ability to pose as you.

How to Protect Yourself

- If you are uncomfortable with a follower, block them. To do so, simply click on their user name and then click the block user box under their picture. You can also protect against unwanted followers by making your posts private.
- Be very wary of users who are following a large number of people, but are not being followed back by very many people. This is an indication the user is just looking for people to spam.
- Never enter personal information into a website you reached by clicking on a link in a Twitter post. Instead, if you are going to enter personal information, open a new web browser and type in what you know to be the organization’s website address.
- Someone you haven’t met is never going to post about a legal, legitimate “opportunity” to make thousands of dollars with little or no work involved.

This is not meant to discourage consumers from using Twitter. It’s one of the safe sites on the Internet, and the organization has taken a very proactive approach to stamping out scams and spam. The Department has a presence on the site and can be reached by tweeting @scdca.

For more information, contact the Public Information Division at 803.734.4203, toll free in SC at 1.800.922.1594, or online at www.sconsumer.gov.