

Top Scams Targeting Veterans

In the “how low can you go” category, scammers often target veterans – either in direct scams offering bogus services, or in charity scams that closely mimic the names of legitimate organizations helping veterans and military families. Warn your loved ones of these top tricks:

Bogus sales – A scammer claiming to be a deploying service member posts a large ticket item on a classified ad website that he needs to sell right away and at a steep discount. The scammer asks for upfront payment with a wire transfer or gift cards.

Real estate rip-off – A scammer posts a fake rental property on a classified ad website offering military discounts. You just need to wire transfer a security deposit to the landlord.

VA phishing – A caller claiming to be from the Department of Veterans Affairs calls to "update" your information.

Fake charities – Fake charities use names that are close to the names of legitimate charities, often referencing Armed Forces, veterans, or military families.

Benefits buyout scam – Scammers will target veterans in need of money by offering cash in exchange for their future disability or pension payments. These buyouts are typically a fraction of the value of the benefit.

Dubious investment advice – An “adviser” will tell the veteran she is missing out on benefits, and wants to review her investment portfolio. He’ll then want to put the veteran’s investments in a trust, to appear to have fewer assets and to therefore be eligible for an additional pension.

Here’s how to avoid falling for scams like these:

- Be suspicious anytime you are asked to pay by wire transfer or gift cards.
- Know that the VA will never call, text or e-mail you to update your information.
- Check out the charity on www.give.org or www.charitynavigator.org before giving any money.
- Make donations directly to the veterans’ organizations you know.
- Only work with VA-accredited representatives when dealing with VA benefits; you can search for them online at the VA Office of General Counsel website.
- Be sure to share this alert with friends and family.