



Republic of Namibia

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CORONAVIRUS SCAMS

ISSUED: MARCH 2020

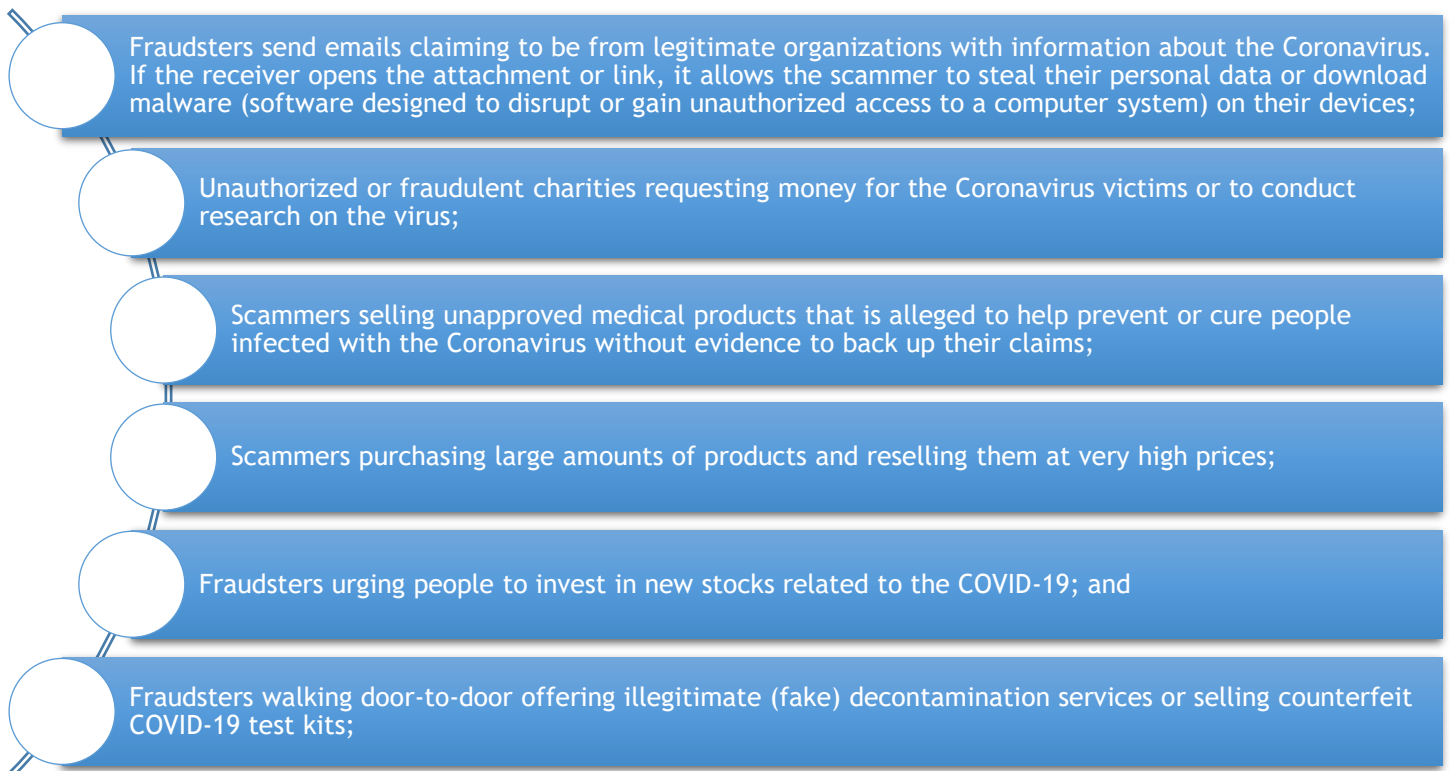
1. Background

The recent Coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) presents a significant challenge to the entire world and it has brought considerable human suffering and major economic disruption. COVID-19 is a viral respiratory illness that can cause symptoms of fever, cough, muscle ache, headache, and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, the infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, and even death. The virus, which has not been previously identified in humans was discovered in 2019 in Wuhan City, China.

The Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) has observed a worrying increase in scams linked to the COVID-19. The FIC has a duty to enhance public awareness regarding known fraudulent schemes that the public could be exposed to. It is against this background that the FIC presents this communication.

2. How do these scams operate?

Criminals are exploiting the fear and uncertainty created by COVID-19 to prey on innocent citizens who are only looking to protect their health and that of their loved ones. They are carrying out these scams through emails, websites, phone calls, text messages, social media as well as in person. Below are some common methods that are used by the scammers:

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- Fraudsters send emails claiming to be from legitimate organizations with information about the Coronavirus. If the receiver opens the attachment or link, it allows the scammer to steal their personal data or download malware (software designed to disrupt or gain unauthorized access to a computer system) on their devices;
 - Unauthorized or fraudulent charities requesting money for the Coronavirus victims or to conduct research on the virus;
 - Scammers selling unapproved medical products that is alleged to help prevent or cure people infected with the Coronavirus without evidence to back up their claims;
 - Scammers purchasing large amounts of products and reselling them at very high prices;
 - Fraudsters urging people to invest in new stocks related to the COVID-19; and
 - Fraudsters walking door-to-door offering illegitimate (fake) decontamination services or selling counterfeit COVID-19 test kits;

3. How can I protect myself?

-  Do not buy medical supplies from markets who are not registered with medical authorities;
-  Ignore offers for vaccinations against COVID-19 from unregistered medical services providers (at least until a known vaccine is available);
-  Before you donate, verify that a charity organization is registered with relevant authorities by visiting their website, or calling to confirm such;
-  Be alert to fraudulent investment opportunities; and
-  Do not click on links or open attachments from unfamiliar senders offering information or products related to the pandemic.

REMEMBER

At present, there are no vaccines, or similar other prescriptions available to prevent the COVID-19. However, this does not mean that a vaccine will not eventually become available. Meanwhile, the FIC advises its members of the public against entertaining unsolicited medical advice from untrusted sources. It is advisable to seek any medical advice from reliable sources such as the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

To help minimize this risk, if you suspect that you could be a victim of the COVID-19 scams, report such suspicions immediately to the FIC or the nearest police station.