



Public Service Announcement

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION



June 11, 2020

Alert Number

I-061120-PSA

Questions regarding this PSA should be directed to your local **FBI Field Office**.

Local Field Office

Locations:

www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field

Implementation of Fraudulent COVID-19 Shipping and Insurance Fees by Criminal Actors

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is issuing this announcement to raise awareness of criminal actors exploiting the public and the shipping industry by invoking fake COVID-19-related regulations and fees.

The FBI is aware of incidents involving individuals or companies referencing fake "newly enacted" COVID-19 shipping laws, regulations, or insurance requirements with the purpose of charging additional fees before the delivery of a product. Examples of this criminal activity include demanding fraudulent COVID-19 insurance fees after the purchase for the delivery of live pets from online U.S. websites. An additional example includes criminal actors fraudulently collecting "refundable" maritime insurance fees, citing fake COVID-19 laws.

The following are indicators of possible scams or fraudulent activity:

- The reference to "new" laws or regulations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and refusal to provide additional information;
- Requiring additional charges or fees before delivery of a product;
- Repeatedly providing excuses for delivery delays, including citing COVID-19 laws, regulations, or requirements;
- Requesting money be paid to an unknown third party (e.g., warehouse, insurance company, or shipping company);
- Stating that any required fees, payments, or deposits will be refunded or reimbursed later; and
- Inability to make direct contact with shipper or manufacturer by phone or email (disconnected lines, lack of response, etc.).

The following are best practices to avoid becoming a victim of a scam or fraudulent activity:

- Never give out personal or financial information to a person or company you do not know and trust;
- Always verify the information of manufacturers, shipping companies, and service providers before making payments;
- Be wary of unsolicited messages claiming that a delivery is being held until payment is received, especially if you or your business have not placed any orders or expect to receive any deliveries; and
- Research and verify that any laws or shipping requirements related to COVID-19 are legitimate before sending payment.

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If you believe you are the victim of an Internet scam or cyber crime, or to report suspicious activity, please visit the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov.