



CONSUMER ALERT

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AG Curtis Hill: Small businesses ravaged by coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic must look out for scammers

Scammers are looking to capitalize on more than just consumers' fears over the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. They are also hoping to take advantage of vulnerable small businesses, Attorney General Curtis Hill said today.

There are resources available to small businesses when it comes to the economic impacts of this ongoing public health emergency, Attorney General Hill said. However, small businesses must remain vigilant and be on the lookout for fraudsters who may appear to be offering help, but are actually seeking to harm.

The [Better Business Bureau](#) (BBB) said scams involving the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) are targeting small businesses. In one example, imposters posing as the SBA offer grants for small businesses affected by the outbreak. After completing an application for the grant by perhaps providing banking and business information, the business owner is asked to pay a "processing fee," the BBB said.

No matter how much your small business could use this "free" money, do not take it, the BBB says.

Attorney General Hill urged business owners to thoroughly research any offers like this one before accepting and providing personal information.

"Small businesses in Indiana are normally trying to satisfy their customers and maintain a profit. But as this pandemic plays out, small businesses are shifting their business models, keeping people safe and just trying to survive," Attorney General Hill said. "This juggling act makes them especially vulnerable to scammers who are trying to illegally and immorally profit from this crisis."

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has documented additional coronavirus-related scams targeting businesses. These include "public health" scams, government check scams, information technology scams and more. Read more from the FTC [here](#).

To avoid coronavirus-related scams, Attorney General Hill said to do the following:

- Carefully inspect the email addresses in all messages landing in your inbox.
- Avoid clicking on links in unsolicited emails and be wary of email attachments.
- Use trusted, legitimate government websites to obtain up-to-date information.
- Don't reveal personal or financial information via email or text message.
- Hang up on robocalls.

If you own a small business in the Hoosier state, visit the [Indiana Chamber of Commerce website](#) to view assistance options available to you. Small businesses may also be eligible for relief under the [CARES Act](#), which contains \$376 billion in relief for American workers and small businesses.

Hoosiers who believe they have encountered scams may file a complaint online with the Office of the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division by clicking [here](#). If you need more information about services provided by this office, you may call 1-800-382-5516.

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