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# The Monthly Brief

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## FEDERAL AGENCY IMPOSTERS

The [Federal Trade Commission](#) and the [Inspector General Office](#) are warning that criminals pretending to be from federal government agencies are tricking victims into sending money or sharing personal information. To prove their legitimacy, crooks are using real names of government officials, and sending fake credentials, documents, even law enforcement badges!

No matter what these scammers say, they pressure victims to act immediately and to pay using methods that are not typical for federal government business. Criminals want payments that are quick, anonymous, and tough to reverse.

**How it Works:** These scams primarily use the telephone to contact you, but criminals may also use email, text message, social media, or U.S. mail. Criminals pretend to be from an agency or organization you know to gain your trust. They'll say there's a problem or offer a prize, then pressure you to take immediate action. Payment is sought via gift cards, prepaid debit card, internet currency or cryptocurrency, wire transfer, payment apps, or mailing cash. Criminals use these forms of payment because they are hard to trace.

### Tips to Protect Yourself:

**Don't Act Immediately:** Stop, get advice.  
**Don't Transfer Money:** Confirm the story  
**Be Skeptical, Cautious:** Caller ID, docs, photos, credentials, and badges can all be fake.  
**Don't Click Unsolicited Links:** Period.

For more information visit [ftc.gov/scam](https://ftc.gov/scam) and report attempts to the FBI at [ic3.gov](https://ic3.gov).

\*FTC, OIG, SSA, FBI

## Comments or Questions?

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## Crooks Going Postal



A clever scheme is making the rounds where scammers [impersonate the U.S. Postal Service \(USPS\)](#). Text messages appearing to be from the USPS that offer helpful info like confirming a delivery address, are followed by a link for tracking information. The message is very convincing and looks official. So many people won't think twice about clicking the link. That leads to criminals trying to get your personal info like SSN, DOB, banking, credit card, and account login info. That info is then used to steal your identity and carry out other crimes like financial fraud.

The Postal Service does offer tools to help track specific packages, but customers are [required to register online](#), or send a text message directly to the USPS that includes a tracking number. USPS will not send customers text messages or e-mails without a customer first requesting the service, and it will NOT contain a link.

So, if you did not initiate the tracking request for a specific package directly from USPS and it contains a link: don't click, it's a scam. To learn more about USPS text scams check out their helpful YouTube video [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

For more information about the legitimate USPS tracking services visit [USPS TEXT TRACKING](#). To protect yourself and others from consumer frauds, visit their [fraud prevention page](#).  
\*USPS

## HOW TO SPOT FAKE SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Fake social media accounts can promote phony products, spread scams and even share lies and misinformation. It's important to spot a phony account right away - before you engage with their content. Tips for identifying fake social media accounts:

**Check the Content:** Fake accounts rely heavily on stock and recycled content. Beware of accounts with no original images or text, misspellings, and grammatical errors.

**Engagement & Followers:** Fake accounts purchase both to look legit. It's important to [understand how this works](#) and spot [follower-to-engagement ratios](#).

**Check for Verification Badges:** Especially for celebrity or influencer accounts. Check FAQ sections for how badges work and where it should appear.

**Polarized Politics:** Often use disinformation, one-sided viewpoints, no authorship and amount to trolling behaviors. Learn more and [take the "Spot the Troll" quiz!](#)

**Bogus Reviews:** Used to sway consumers for or against, [fake reviews can be purchased or created](#). Learn the [Red Flags of fake reviews](#).

**Transparency:** Clear info on who runs the account, contact methods, interaction and original profile images.

Read more on [social media influencers](#). To learn more about safely using social media to promote your business, see the [BBB Business Tip: 5 easy ways to use social media](#) to help your small business.  
\*BBB, SproutSocial, SpotTheTroll.org PRIG .org.