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## CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **ANOTHER PHONE SCAM TARGETS AREA RESIDENTS**

*Never give out personal information without verification of person asking for it*

**MUSCATINE, Iowa** – Several residents have contacted the Muscatine Police Department and the Muscatine County Joint Communications (MUSCOM) office concerning a new phone scam they have received.

Beverly Griffith, MUSCOM Manager, said that individuals have called to inform police that someone claiming to be from the Social Security office called to say that the individuals' social security card was found near a duffel bag of cocaine and that unless that individual paid a certain sum of money to the caller, criminal charges would be pressed.

The Acting Inspector General of Social Security, Gale Stallworth Stone, urged citizens in a Dec. 7, 2018, news release to remain vigilant of telephone impersonation schemes that exploit the Social Security Administration (SSA) reputation and authority. Recent reports of calls coming from people claiming to be from the SSA indicate that these unknown callers are using increasingly threatening language.

The callers state, due to improper or illegal activity with a citizen's Social Security number (SSN) or account, a citizen will be arrested or face other legal action if they fail to call a provided phone number to address the issue.

“This is a scam,” Stone said. “Citizens should not engage with these calls or provide any personal information.”

SSA employees do contact citizens, generally those who have ongoing business with SSA, by telephone for customer-service purposes according to the news release. However, SSA employees will never threaten you for information; they will not state that you face potential arrest or other legal action if you fail to provide information. In those cases, the call is fraudulent, and you should just hang up.

“Unfortunately, scammers will try anything to mislead and harm innocent people, including scaring them into thinking that something is wrong with their Social Security account and they might be arrested,” Stone said. “I encourage everyone to remain watchful of these schemes and to alert family members and friends of their prevalence. We will continue to track these scams and warn citizens, so that they can stay several steps ahead of these thieves.”

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) warned in an October 19, 2018, news release that some of these impersonation calls have “spoofed” SSA’s national customer service phone number, displaying 1-800-772-1213 as the incoming number on caller ID. People who have accepted the calls said the caller identifies as an SSA employee. In some cases, the caller states that SSA does not have all of the person’s personal information, such as their Social Security number (SSN), on file. Other callers claim SSA needs additional information so the agency can increase the person’s benefit payment, or that SSA will terminate the person’s benefits if they do not confirm their information.

“This caller-ID spoofing scheme exploits SSA’s trusted reputation, and it shows that scammers will try anything to mislead and harm innocent people,” Stone said. “I encourage everyone to remain watchful of these schemes and to alert family members and friends of their prevalence. We will continue to track these scams and warn citizens, so that they can stay several steps ahead of these thieves.”

The Acting Inspector General urges citizens to be extremely cautious, and to avoid providing information such as your SSN or bank account numbers to unknown persons over the phone or



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internet unless you are certain of who is receiving it. If you receive a suspicious call from someone alleging to be from SSA, you should report that information to the OIG at 1-800-269-0271 or online at <https://oig.ssa.gov/report>.