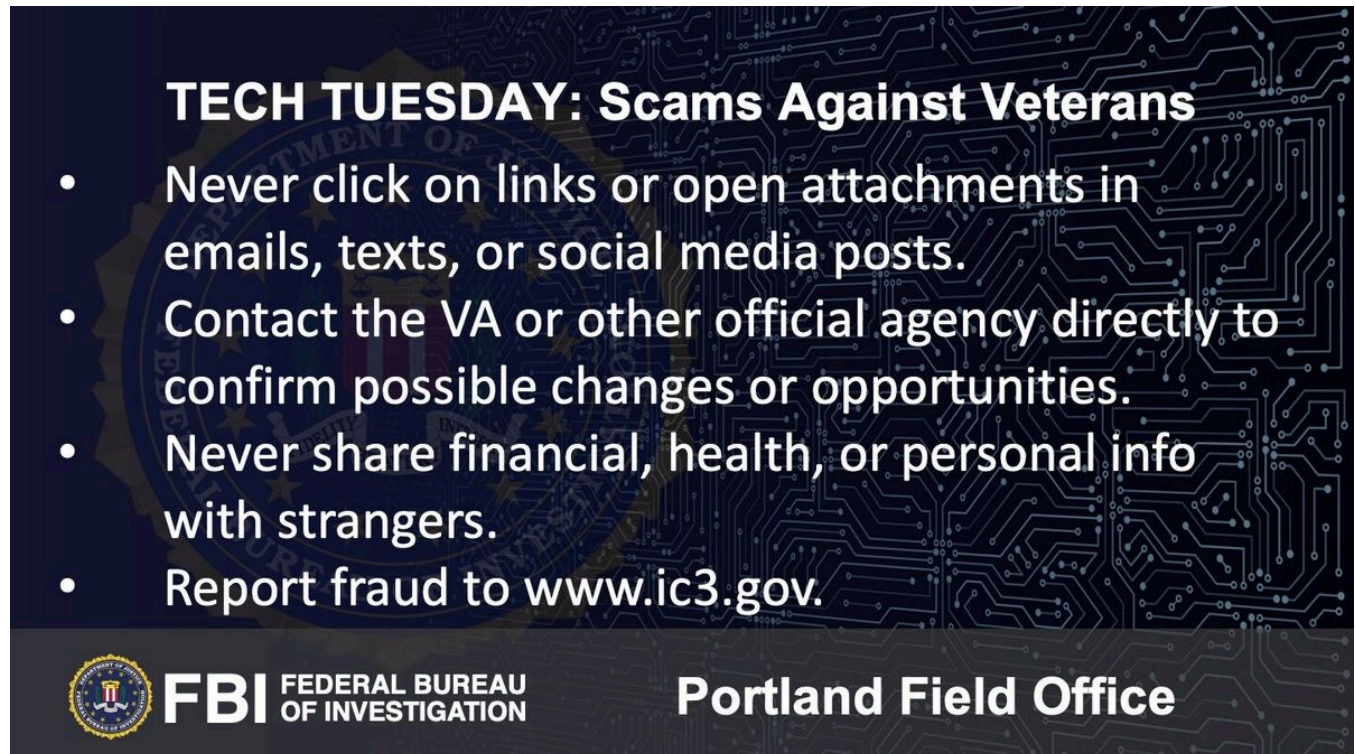


Tech Tuesday: Building a Digital Defense Against Scams Targeting Veterans

November 9, 2021



TECH TUESDAY: Scams Against Veterans

- Never click on links or open attachments in emails, texts, or social media posts.
- Contact the VA or other official agency directly to confirm possible changes or opportunities.
- Never share financial, health, or personal info with strangers.
- Report fraud to www.ic3.gov.

 **FBI** FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Portland Field Office

Welcome to the Oregon FBI's Tech Tuesday segment. Today: Building a digital defense against scams targeting veterans.

Operation Protect Veterans is a joint venture between the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and AARP. According to these partners, veterans are twice as likely to fall victim to fraudsters. In fact, they say, 16% of veterans have fallen victim to scams compared to 8% of the rest of us.

Why the difference? Veterans tend to be more trusting of those they believe to be fellow members of military service, making them particularly vulnerable to imposter fraud and other types of scams.

Here are some of the more common ones to watch out for:

- **Loan Scams** – A bad actor offers to refinance your VA loan at an extremely low rate.
- **Imposter Scams** – In one scenario, a government agency imposter contacts you to “update your file” to maintain veteran benefits. In another version of this scam, the imposter tells veterans they qualify for a

“secret” program or benefit worth thousands of dollars. Either way, the imposter wants the veteran to share personal health and financial information.

- **Pension Poaching Scams** – The fraudster offers veterans lump sum payments up front, in exchange for signing over all of their future monthly benefit checks.

Here’s how to protect yourself or the veteran in your life:

- Never click on links or open attachments in emails, text messages, or social media posts from unknown senders.
- If someone contacts you about increasing or changing benefits, hang up and look for the official contact information for that agency. Call that agency directly at the publicly-posted number to confirm any changes or opportunities.
- Never give out personal information to someone who contacts you. That includes your date of birth, Social Security number, military identifiers, banking or other financial account information, or health information.

Finally – you should know that the VA will never charge you for processing a claim or request a processing fee prior to releasing benefit payments. Likewise, the VA does not threaten claimants with jail or lawsuits. If someone approaches you with these demands, hang up immediately.

If you are the victim of online fraud, you can report it to the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov or call your local FBI office.