

The Virgin Islands Consortium

U.S. Attorney Shappert Urges VI Public to Report Suspected COVID-19 Fraud

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U.S. Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert of the District of the Virgin Islands today urged the public to report suspected fraud schemes related to COVID-19 (the Coronavirus) by calling the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) hotline (1-866-720-5721) or by sending an email to the NCDF e-mail address, disaster@leo.gov.

In coordination with the Department of Justice, Attorney General William Barr has directed U.S. Attorneys to prioritize the investigation and prosecution of coronavirus fraud schemes identified in their communities.

"Individuals and groups who seek to take unfair advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic will not be tolerated," said Ms. Shappert. "We are asking the public to notify the NCDF of individuals and businesses selling fake cures for COVID-19 online and engaging in other forms of fraud.

"Other examples of suspected COVID-19 fraud include: phishing emails from entities posing as the World Health Organization or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; malicious websites and apps that appear to share Coronavirus-related information to gain and lock access to electronic devices until payment is received; persons seeking donations fraudulently for illegitimate or non-existent charitable organizations; and medical providers obtaining patient information for COVID-19 testing and then using that information to fraudulently bill for other tests and procedures," Ms. Shappert said.

In a memorandum to U.S. Attorneys issued March 19, Deputy Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen also directed each U.S. Attorney to appoint a Coronavirus Fraud Coordinator to serve as the legal counsel for the federal judicial district on matters relating to the Coronavirus, direct the prosecution of Coronavirus-related crimes, and to conduct outreach and awareness activities. First Assistant U.S. Attorney Carlos Cardona will serve as the Coronavirus Fraud Coordinator in the U.S Virgin Islands.

The NCDF can receive and enter complaints into a centralized system that can be accessed by all.

U.S. Attorneys, as well as Justice Department litigating and law enforcement components to identify, investigate and prosecute fraud schemes. The NCDF coordinates complaints with 16 additional federal law enforcement agencies, as well as state Attorneys General and local authorities. The public is urged to provide information so that the NCDF and federal law enforcement can conduct the necessary investigations.

To find more about Department of Justice resources and information, please visit www.justice.gov/coronavirus.