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*Governor*

SPENCER J. COX  
*Lieutenant Governor*

# State of Utah Department of Commerce

CHRIS PARKER  
Executive Director

DANEIL O'BANNON  
Director, Division of Consumer Protection

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## **MEDIA ADVISORY** **UTAH DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE WARNS OF SOCIAL MEDIA CORONAVIRUS RELIEF SCAM**

[Salt Lake City] — The Utah Department of Commerce and the Division of Consumer Protection urgently warn Utahns of a new fraud scheme designed to target social media users by offering COVID-19 aid as bait.

“Sadly, devious scammers prey on fear. Pandemic fears are no exception,” said Chris Parker, Executive Director of the Department of Commerce. “Current COVID-19 fears may lead people in need of assistance to stumble into scams instead of support.”

The scam happens in a few simple steps:

- Fraudsters hack a social media account.
- An official looking “COVID-19 Relief” phone number is posted on the account.
- People who call the number are tricked into revealing personal details, like bank account numbers, credit cards, and other financial information in hopes of receiving help.
- Fraudsters then use those details to rip off the consumer.

The scheme came to the attention of the Utah Division of Consumer Protection from a tip by an alert consumer. They called the number for COVID-19 relief posted on their friend’s social media account, but hung up when asked for personal financial information.

“No matter how official something looks or sounds, a red flag should go up anytime someone asks for your personal financial information,” said Daniel O’Bannon, Director of the Division of Consumer Protection. He advised consumers that sixty seconds of research can stop most scams. “Slow down. A quick internet search can save a lot of grief.”

For more resources on avoiding coronavirus-related fraud, visit the Division of Consumer Protection’s “Fraud Squad” website at <https://fraudsquad.utah.gov/coronavirus.html>.