Jan 6, 2022

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Stronger, Safer Florida

Attorney General Ashley Moody News Release

CA: Beware of COVID-19 Test Scams as Omicron Cases Increase

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today issued a Consumer Alert warning Floridians about new and reemerging COVID-19 test scams as Omicron variant cases increase nationwide. With more and more people seeking tests, scammers may be exploiting this demand to steal personal, financial or medical information. There are recent reports in Florida and nationwide of potential fake COVID-19 testing sites, imposter health care workers at legitimate sites and at-home testing scams. Attorney General Moody is asking Floridians to remain cautious when requesting a COVID-19 test—both at a testing site and at home.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “As we have seen throughout the pandemic, scammers change tactics as news and situations change. With the recent rise in the number of people seeking COVID-19 tests comes an increased risk that scammers will try to take advantage of the demand. Please take precautions to protect your personal information when seeking a test—whether at a legitimate site or when purchasing an at-home test.”

Long lines at in-person testing sites have caused many Floridians to seek the convenience of at-home COVID-19 tests and testing services. Before purchasing one of these tests or providing personal information to companies offering at-home testing services, particularly online, follow these steps to verify the legitimacy of the product:

- Only purchase products from a well-established, legitimate store or website;
- Search online for the brand name of the test and any complaints;
- Beware of private companies that offer free or reduced cost at-home testing services, particularly if those companies require private information to make an appointment;

and
- Watch out for private companies that require personal information to sign up for an at-home testing service but will not guarantee an appointment time.

In addition to at-home test scams, there have been recent reports of suspicious COVID-19 testing sites popping up in Illinois. The sites appear legitimate but are designed to steal personal information from unsuspecting test seekers.

Signs of illegitimate, pop-up testing sites include:

- - Having no affiliation with local medical providers or government entities;
  - Not delivering test results;
  - Workers seeming uninformed about the testing process; and
  - Volunteers that are unmasked or not following current Center for Disease Control and Prevention point-of-care guidelines and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's standards during interactions with patients.

Last week in Sarasota, law enforcement received reports of suspicious individuals impersonating health care workers at a legitimate testing site asking test seekers to provide personal, financial and medical information.

Below are questions to ask to help spot a testing-site imposter:

- - Are they dressed the same as the other health care workers on site?
  - Are they interacting with test seekers within the established test-site area?
  - Can they accurately and correctly answer questions without seeming nervous or confused?
  - Do they pressure test seekers for personal or financial information?
  - Are health care guidelines and standards being followed?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration reviews and authorizes the use of products to prevent or treat COVID-19, including vaccines, tests, drugs and non-vaccine biological products, medical products and devices and more. Unfortunately, some bad actors may sell unproven or illegal products to profit off the pandemic. Not only are these products ineffective, but they could endanger consumers. FDA's website provides an updated list of fraudulent products and warning letters of firms who have been reported for selling these fake products. To view the list, click here.

Anyone who suspects a COVID-19 test-related scam should report it to local law enforcement, or to the Florida Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com.

To see more of Attorney General Moody's Consumer Alerts, including alerts on COVID-19, click here.

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The Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division issues Consumer Alerts to inform

Floridians of emerging scams, new methods used to commit fraud, increased reports of common scams, or any other deceptive practice. Consumer Alerts are designed to notify Floridians about scams and available refunds in an effort to prevent financial losses or other harm caused by deceptive practices. Anyone encountering a scam should report the incident to the Florida Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com.