

NEWS RELEASE



**Tacoma Police Department
For Immediate Release
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Criminals Exploiting COVID-19 to Commit Unemployment Fraud

TACOMA, Wash. – City, State and Federal law enforcement agencies are currently investigating a widespread fraud campaign in which victims' identities are being used to file false unemployment claims.

Victims, who have not filed unemployment claims, have received notification from their employer's Human Resources department or the Washington State Employment Securities Department indicating an unemployment claim has been filed on their behalf.

The Tacoma Police Department recommends the following steps for anyone who believes they are a victim of unemployment fraud, which is Identity Theft:

- Contact your employer's Human Resources Department to report the incident.
- Contact the Washington State Employment Security Department at (800) 246-9763. Wait times can be extremely long; you may also file online at <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/webform/ContactUS/>. You will need the following information for identity verification:
 - Last 4 Digits of Your Social Security Number
 - Date of Birth
 - Address
 - Current Phone Number
 - Information on How You Learned a Claim was Filed Using Your Identity
- File a police report with the agency within whose jurisdiction you live. Identity theft reports within Pierce County can be reported by calling (253) 798-4721. You will be directed to the appropriate jurisdiction in which you live.

- Obtain free credit reports from Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion at www.annualcreditreport.com or by calling (877) 322-8228. Review the reports to see if there are any accounts or hard inquiries that you did not make or open. Report that you have been a victim of identity theft. Report that a fraudulent claim was made using your identity and provide the case number from your police report. You can have a fraud alert put on your identity or freeze your credit. A fraud alert is free and will help make it more difficult for someone to open new accounts in your name. To place a fraud alert, contact one of the three credit bureaus (each bureau must report the information to the other two bureaus). Contact information is as follows:
 - Experian (888) 397-3742
 - TransUnion (800) 680-7289
 - Equifax (888) 766-0008
- If you are a confirmed victim of identity theft, check your credit activity, initially at least every 90 days. As a victim of identity theft, you have the right to check it monthly if you choose.
- Credit Freeze – If you do not have upcoming large purchases, like a home, you may choose to freeze your credit for further protection. This is a free service available at www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0497-credit-freeze-faqs.
- File a report with the Federal Trade Commission and give them the case number from your police report by visiting www.identitytheft.gov. Additional information can be found at www.ftc.gov/idtheft.
- Consider setting up an Internal Revenue Service account at www.irs.gov/payments/view-your-tax-account. If you create an account with your social security number, it can help prevent criminals from creating a new account using your identity.
- Consider locking your social security number at www.e-verify.gov/employees. The next wave of fraudulent behavior may be IRS tax fraud.
- Start a file containing all documentation pertaining to the identity theft. Keep any notes, copies of emails, etc. You can reference this paper trail if you face any identity issues with creditors, etc., or locate inaccuracies on your credit history in the future. You can also obtain a copy of your police report at www.SouthSound911.org. Some government services and accommodations are available to victims of identity theft that are not available to the general public, such as having certain public records sealed.

While these steps will help resolve the fraudulent unemployment claim, you might choose to further protect yourself. Unfortunately, most victims of identity theft are victimized multiple times if protections are not in place. You can place a freeze on your credit, review your credit reports on a regular basis and hire a credit monitoring service to alert you if there are any changes. The FTC website can help help guide you through the complex system at www.ftc.gov/idtheft.

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