

7 On Your Side: Warning about Obamacare

By: Michael Finney

Confusion over the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, is making this a prime opportunity for scammers taking advantage of you. 7 On Your Side takes a look at what you need to know to protect yourself.

These scams are slowly spreading across the nation and it's only a matter of time before you run into one.

"Obamacare scams could rear up like poison ivy in the Bay Area once October 1 passes," said James Quiggle from the Coalition Against Insurance Fraud.

The Coalition Against Insurance Fraud group has members ranging from San Francisco-based Consumer Action to Allstate Insurance. Quiggle says victims have already been reported in half the states in the country. Identity thieves are telephoning or even knocking on doors claiming to be able to enroll anyone in a health care insurance program.

Quiggle said scammers will say things like, "All we need to do to sign you up is hand over your bank account numbers, your credit card numbers and your social security numbers, and then you're good to go."

Suspicious websites have been shut down. Investigators concluded this one site looked too much like the government-backed site. The look-a-like had servers in the Bay Area, Texas and was traced to a company in Panama.

Peter V. Lee is the executive director of Covered California -- the state agency created to implement the Affordable Health Care Act. He told us, "We've set up our own center for consumer protection within Covered California, to look for those places that consumers get wrong information, misinformation, shut them down."

Some scammers are offering to enroll you for a fee. You need to know, it shouldn't cost you anything to sign up. You're only cost is your share of the monthly premium.

"If someone knocking on your door saying, 'I want \$50 to help you enroll in Covered California,' you know they're not really from Covered California," said Lee.

One woman received a phone call saying she had to sign up for her new Medicare card.

"So she actually gave the person a lot of money, hundreds of dollars and she never saw the money again. She thought she was signing up and guess what? She was scammed," said Quiggle.

Here in California, the official website is CoveredCA.com. It's available in 13 different languages.

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**Coalition Against
Insurance Fraud**