

DATCP: Wisconsin military families: Be on guard to scams

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MADISON - The last thing soldiers should have to worry about during a deployment is whether or not their family members are getting ripped off back home. Yet there are bad actors who specifically target military families with their scams.

July is Military Consumer Protection Month, and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is pleased to honor our service members by sharing ways the Bureau of Consumer Protection can help protect you and your family from scams and identity theft.

“While facing the same risks of scams and identity theft as the general public, military families are also targeted by criminals who use the military lifestyle to find openings for additional scams,” said Michelle Reinen, Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

In fact, an [AARP study](#) found that veterans have lost money to scammers at more than twice the rate of civilians over recent years. According to the survey, nearly 80% of the veteran respondents reported having been targeted in a scam that was “seeking to take advantage of their status as a military veteran.” Some of the common ways military members are targeted include donation requests to support fellow veterans and pitches for help in taking advantage of “little-known government programs” that could supposedly result in a cash payout or payment for medical devices.

Identity theft is another serious risk, with scammers seeking to collect the personal information of service members through “phishing” operations. These phishing ploys may involve phony job postings or housing rental ads that claim to be seeking veterans; imposter phone scams where a caller falsely claims to be with the VA or another veterans’ support

organization; or fake support services that set up operations using phone numbers that are nearly identical to those used by legitimate organizations.

Some DATCP resources available to support military families with consumer protection issues include:

- **DATCP fact sheets.** [Available on the DATCP website](#), these factsheets go into great detail on a wide range of consumer issues like telemarketing scams, home improvement, job scams, false advertising, landlord/tenant rights, and much more.
- **Consumer Protection Hotline.** Available weekdays from 7:45am to 4:30pm to answer your consumer protection-related questions and guide callers toward references that can help. Reach the hotline at 800-422-7128 or datcphotline@wi.gov.
- **Identity Theft Assistance.** The Consumer Protection Bureau has staff who help identity theft victims mitigate the potential damage to their identities and credit histories. If your family or friends believe they may have had their identities misused, start the mitigation process by visiting the [identity theft protection section](#) of the DATCP website or by contacting the Consumer Protection Hotline.
- **Presentations.** If you are involved with a group serving the needs of service members or veterans and would like a presentation on current consumer scams or identity theft, please let us know. [Request a Consumer Protection Bureau presentation](#) on the DATCP website.
- **File a Complaint.** If you are having difficulty resolving an issue or believe that you may have been targeted or victimized by a scammer, [file a complaint with DATCP online](#) or contact the Consumer Protection Hotline.

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