

UN health agency warns against coronavirus COVID-19 criminal scams

 uneca.org/stories/un-health-agency-warns-against-coronavirus-covid-19-criminal-scams

The World Health Organization (WHO) is warning that criminals are taking advantage of the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, to steal money or sensitive information.

Criminal elements, says the UN health agency, are posing as WHO representatives, and recommends that, if anyone is contacting by a person or organization claiming to be from the Organization, they should take steps to verify their authenticity.

Examples of suspicious behaviour include asking for login information, sending unasked-for email attachments, directing people to a website other than www.who.int, and asking for direct donations to emergency response plans or funding appeals.

WHO firmly states that it never does any of these things, and warns that scams can come in the form of emails, websites, phone calls, text messages, and even fax messages.

Malicious emails sent by scammers are known as “phishing” emails. They appear to come from the WHO, and ask for sensitive information, such as user names and passwords, ask users to click on suspicious links, and open malicious attachments. Following these instructions allows criminals to install software that can give them access to, or damage, computers.

Seek official information

As many social media accounts share information about COVID-19, the head of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, called on the public to seek official sources (such as the WHO website) to find out how to protect oneself, loved ones and the local community. The WHO website has comprehensive, regularly updated and authoritative expert information on the virus.

In a Tweet published on Saturday, Tedros acknowledged the anxiety that many feel about COVID-19, and emphasised the importance of preparation, and planning how to stay safe at work, school or places of worship.

53 countries now affected

On Saturday, WHO reported that two new Member States (Mexico and San Marino) reported cases of COVID-19 between Friday and Saturday, as the number of cases continues to rise. The latest situation report from the organization shows that, over the latest 24-hour reporting period, the number of new cases outside of China (1,318) far outweighed the number of new cases within the country (435).

Nevertheless, the vast majority of confirmed cases (79,394) are in China. The other 52 affected countries currently have 6,009 cases between them. 2,838 people have died from the virus in China, with 86 deaths reported in the rest of the world.

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