NEWS RELEASE
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Medicare Phone Scam Targets Seniors

PIERRE, S.D.- Attorney General Marty Jackley is warning South Dakota seniors to be cautious about fraudulent telemarketing calls targeting Medicare recipients. Callers are seeking to obtain personal information that could be used to file fraudulent claims, commit identity theft or gain access to financial accounts.

The Consumer Protection Division and the South Dakota Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) have received complaints from seniors that have been receiving unsolicited calls from various sources claiming to be a diabetic supply company offering free diabetic supplies or a Medicare-approved back or leg brace. Scam artists offer a number of free devices or services in exchange for the consumer's Medicare number. Medicare does not make unsolicited calls.

Sometimes, the caller claims to be a government agency representative, and tells the consumer that he or she is eligible for new medical equipment or supplies that are generally covered under Medicare. The caller then asks the consumer to "confirm" his or her Medicare number for eligibility and identity.

"Companies that work with Medicare are prohibited from making unsolicited telemarketing calls and such calls are direct violations of Medicare rules," said Jackley. "Seniors should not accept free items or services from unsolicited callers. Seniors are also encouraged to carefully review Medicare summary notices for any suspicious charges or items that have been double-billed."

Medicare has a cap on how many times individuals can receive these types of products. It becomes problematic when consumers receive sub-standard or non-conforming products and cannot request a new one due to the Medicare limitations and guidelines that have been set.

Anyone who has been a victim of this scam or needs additional information should call the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 1-800-300-1986 or consumerhelp@state.sd.us or contact SMP at 1-800-822-8804.

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