

Tax season is just around the corner and scam artists are well aware of this fact. Siouxland Aging Services advises seniors to be on the watch for a postcard relating to tax increases on Social Security Income. The postcard uses scare tactics to entice seniors to send for “free information at no cost or obligation to legally eliminate the tax on Social Security Income. This postcard comes inside a pull-apart envelope that mimics the look of many official documents. “As is often the case, many dubious offers or scam attempts prey on the vulnerable citizens using exaggerated claims or twisting current event topics to their advantage,” warns Chris Kuchta, Advocacy and Community Relations Director for Siouxland Aging Services.

While researching this claim, Kuchta who oversees the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program at Siouxland Aging Services discovered that National Processing Center at PMB#220, 325 Pennsylvania Ave SE, Washington DC has a dubious history of different types of mailings that have employed similar upsetting language. Kuchta stated, “Seniors always need to be cautious before releasing any personal information, especially if it is a company with whom they have not done business. Cold calls – when companies contact a person randomly, whether in person, by phone, mail or email – are mainly looking for items such as social security, Medicare, Medicaid, bank or credit card account numbers. Everyone needs to protect these important numbers.”

Seniors need to do their business with well-known companies. They can check out a company’s reputation with the Better Business Bureau, or if a claim appears to be a scam involving seniors, they can call the SMP program at Siouxland Aging Services for assistance. If a claim sounds too good to be true or uses similar scare tactics or plays upon a potential victim’s emotions, be wary of the company. Before disclosing any personal information, check out the true identity of the caller or sender of information by calling the actual company using the phone number from the telephone book. Before sending any money for those “too good to be true” offers - verify, Verify, VERIFY the truth of their claims. This postcard was brought to the attention of the SMP program by a senior and her daughter who wanted to know if the claims and offer were legitimate. The SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) program at Siouxland Aging Services educates seniors on healthcare fraud, scams and identity theft, helps seniors to report these types of fraud, and advocates for those who may become victims. Programs concerning protecting seniors from healthcare fraud, scams and identity theft are available. For more information on the SMP program or assistance with identifying a potential scam, contact Siouxland Aging Services at 279-6900 or 800-798-6916.