PPP-Related Scams To Avoid

The Paycheck Protection Plan has provided funds to many businesses during this pandemic. Unfortunately, fraud schemes have created confusion and opportunities with the latest cyber-security scams allowing thieves to gain access to confidential information and accounts of individuals and businesses.

We want you to be aware of some of these scams that are loosely connected to the Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP), so you can be extra cautious and diligent. These tips could help you avoid allowing your information and accounts to be accessed.

Please take a few moments to check out these tips and possibly avoid falling prey to these fraudsters!

Email attachments. This is still the most basic and common online access to data. Many individuals, consumers, and small business owners alike, may receive a seemingly innocuous email, saying that it offers information or details connected to the PPP program. However, like so many other scams, these emails often carry a **fraudulent link that connects to a hacker website or downloads a virus. Be sure to carefully review these types of emails as they can be very dangerous.**

Web pages. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has issued a warning regarding at least one cyber thief who is spoofing the Small Business Administration COVID-19 relief webpage through phishing emails. The **phishing emails contain a malicious link to a fake page used for re-directs and credential stealing**. The phishing email subject line currently reads, "SBA Application - Review and Proceed" and the sender is marked as "disastercustomerservice@sba[.]gov". In general, these links can appear very legitimate, which serves to lure in unsuspecting and well-meaning individuals and businesses. But on closer look, **the extra characters in the domain can increase your suspicion**.

Phishing schemes. Look out for phishing attacks/scams utilizing the SBA logo. In many cases, these fraudulent links will lead you to input your personally identifiable information (PII), to obtain personal banking access, or to install ransomware or other kinds of malware on your computer. Any email communication from SBA will come from accounts ending with sba.gov. **The presence of an SBA logo on a webpage does not guarantee the information is accurate or endorsed by SBA. Cross-reference any information you receive with information available at www.sba.gov or visit the SBA website and log in instead of using the links found in the email.**

NOTE: Some information has been reproduced from content of Steve Brown, PCBB, December 14, 2020 Newsletter.