

Karima M. Woods, Commissioner

## **DISB CONSUMER ALERT**

### **Beware of Free Gas Card Scams**

The District of Columbia Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking (DISB) warns residents to be on guard against free gas card scams.

#### **HOW IS THE SCAM PERPETRATED?**

In addition to being found on social media, free gas card scammers are using telemarketing calls, text messages, emails, and pop-up ads to invite victims to visit their fraudulent websites.

As gasoline prices surge, enterprising fraudsters have discovered a new way to victimize consumers. Scammers have been creating advertisements which appear to be from known companies. These ads target consumers by email, text message, or by some other means of communication, such as telemarketing calls.

The scammer's ad may appear legitimate and often contains logos or service marks of popular companies. For example, the ad informs the victim that they have won a free gasoline card worth \$200 from a well-known gasoline company—such as Shell. The ad instructs the victim to call a phone number or go to the scammer's webpage to claim their free gasoline card. Once contact is made with the victim, the scammer requests their personal information. The scammer then tells the victim that they must pay a nominal \$2.00 shipping and handling fee. To facilitate the payment of the fee, the scammer asks for the victim's personal credit card information.

However, what the victim soon discovers is that not only does their \$200 gasoline card not arrive, but that someone has made hundreds or thousands of dollars of unauthorized purchases to their personal credit card.

#### **WAYS TO AVOID FREE GAS CARD SCAMS:**

- When someone you do not know contacts you with news that you have won a valuable gas card, be very skeptical—especially if you do not recall having entered any contests.
- Never give out your personal details or financial information over the phone, email, text, or social media to an unverified individual, even if the person claims to be with a familiar business.
- If an unsolicited call is prerecorded or automated and asks you to press a number to be connected with a live person, hang up.

- If the caller immediately asks, “Can you hear me?” or another generic question, hang up. This is how unsolicited scammers can verify that your number is active. Once a robocall system recognizes your phone number as active, it may place your number on a list for subsequent calls.

### **REPORT FRAUD**

If you believe you have been the victim of a free gas card scam, you may file a report with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/ReportFraud) or call the FTC’s Consumer Response Center at 877-382-4357. You may also contact the DISB Enforcement and Consumer Protection Division at 202-727-8000.

### **DISB Mission**

Our mission is three-fold: (1) cultivate a regulatory environment that protects consumers and attracts and retains financial services firms to the District; (2) empower and educate residents and (3) support the development and expansion of business.

### **Social Media**

DISB Twitter: [@DCDISB](https://twitter.com/DCDISB)

DISB Facebook: [facebook.com/DISBDC](https://www.facebook.com/DISBDC)

DISB Website: [disb.dc.gov](https://disb.dc.gov)

