



For Immediate Release
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Stanislaus County issues alert on Health Inspector Scam

Stanislaus County, CA- Stanislaus County Department of Environmental Resources, Environmental Health Division (EH) has become aware of a fraud scheme targeting food facilities and other small businesses in Stanislaus County and across North America. There are media reports of the scam extending throughout Canada and California.

A number of restaurants in Stanislaus County have recently received telephone calls from a person claiming to be a "health inspector" introducing a new procedure for arranging a health inspection. The phony "health inspector" asks the business owner to follow a procedure to get a special "code" to confirm the upcoming inspection. Later the business owner receives a second call asking for the "confirmation code." Of course, there is no such inspection and no real inspector ever arrives.

This phony inspector scheme is part of a larger fraud involving setting up "verified" accounts with a national on-line auction service. The purpose of the "code" request is to get the small business owner to provide false verification to the online auction service. The fraud artist does this to establish a bogus on-line account to be used in other fraud schemes.

Food facilities owners/operators need to be aware of this scam and should protect themselves from this fraudulent action by understanding:

- The Environmental Health Division does not announce inspections in advance, will not call in advance to schedule an inspection requesting information and will not call to schedule an inspection (there may be rare exceptions).
- The Environmental Health Division has not developed a new inspection procedure. Any caller identifying him/herself as a "health inspector" asking you to participate in a "code" process, requesting information or soliciting other information is part of a fraud scheme.
- If you do not recognize your inspector, please ask for proper photo identification.
- Never give out personal or business identification information over the phone unless you are certain of the identity of the person with whom you are speaking.

If you believe you are a victim of this crime, please contact your local law enforcement office. If you have any questions or concerns, please call: (209) 525-6700.