

Scams Involving Impersonation of Federal and State Officials

Q: I received a telephone call from an individual claiming to work for the Board of Pharmacy or the Drug Enforcement Administration, but I think it was a scam. What information and advice can the Board provide?

A: Pharmacists who received such calls have contacted the Board - and we previously sent out an e-mail to pharmacists and pharmacies, warning about these scams. Often (but not always), the caller:

- identifies himself/herself as an employee or “agent” of the Board, sometimes giving a name (which often is not the name of anyone employed by the Board)
- states that:
 - the pharmacy or pharmacist is under investigation for an unspecified reason, or
 - a prescriber is being investigated and the help of the pharmacy or pharmacist is needed
- has some information, such as the license number of the pharmacy or pharmacist (but remember that, by law, license numbers are public information and can be obtained through the Board’s online license verification system)
- asks for information such as:
 - the personal/home telephone number of the pharmacist
 - the DEA registration number for the pharmacy or for a prescriber

If you receive any call from someone who claims to be representing the Board and you have any suspicions, we recommend that you:

- do not provide any requested information;
- tell the caller that you will be contacting the Board to confirm the legitimacy of the call;
- write down information such as
 - the telephone number of the caller
 - any name given to you by the caller
 - what information the caller was trying to obtain

- call or e-mail the Board to verify if the call was legitimate and, if it was a scam, to provide the information mentioned above

Most Board complaint investigations involving pharmacies are conducted in person by a Pharmacy Surveyor employed by the Board. The Surveyor will have identification to demonstrate that they are employed by the Board. When a complaint is investigated by telephone, the Surveyor will have no problem with you calling the Board to confirm that a call is legitimate.

Board staff that do work for the Minnesota Prescription Monitoring Program may also call pharmacies to discuss such issues as errors in data reporting. Those staff will also have no problem with you calling the Board to confirm that the call is legitimate.

DEA has warned health care providers and members of the public of fraudulent phone calls attempting to extort money. Though the tactics change regularly, the callers typically claim to represent DEA and provide either fake names and badge numbers, or the names of well-known senior officials with DEA. The scammers then threaten legal action, including arrest, against the victim unless large fines are paid by wire transfer. In late 2019, the scammers appeared to be spoofing a DEA number based out of Salt Lake City, UT, according to a DEA press release. The agency emphasizes that DEA will never contact practitioners by phone to demand money or any form of payment. DEA will not request any personal or sensitive information by phone, and notification of a legitimate investigation or legal action is always made via official letter or in person. DEA asks anyone who receives a call from a person purporting to be a DEA special agent or other law enforcement official asking for money to refuse the demand and report the threat using the [online form](#) or by calling 877/792-2873. Reporting these calls will assist DEA in investigating and stopping this activity.