ICYMI 03.28.20 | In Case You Missed IT

SCAMS & SHAMS: Critically thinking about Coronavirus news and your information

WASHINGTON — It is very dizzying, the amount of information out there about COVID-19, the Coronavirus. We are dealing with story after story online and through social media, television, radio, and in newspapers and magazines — each with its own take — at all hours of the day and night, from all around the world.

So how can we sort out what is real and what is not?

One already knows to go to Coronavirus.gov for medical information and USA.gov/coronavirus to see what the federal government is doing. Our local governments and health departments have the best information about what people in our area can (and cannot) do. And the Federal Trade Commission has great information on the wide variety of Coronavirus scams. Good. But it’s still a lot.

So first, take a breath. The amount of information is overwhelming — and the topic is tough to handle and sometimes panic-provoking. So, step away from the screen for a minute. Look out a window. Talk to a loved one. Listen to some music. Breathe. Nobody makes good decisions when they’re overwhelmed.

Then, apply some critical thinking tools to all those messages out there. Because, right now, no one can afford to take all the information at face value. Before we act on a message we see, before we share it, or before we even worry about it, ask — and answer — all three of these critical questions:

• Who is the message from? Do I know them? Do I trust them? Am I positive they are who they say they are? Double-check: government impersonators are active right now.

• What do they want me to do? Just know something — or are they trying to get me to act in some way? Do they want me to buy something, download something, or give up personal info?

• What evidence supports the message? Use some independent sources to fact-check it — or debunk it. Maybe talk to someone you trust. But always verify, using a few additional sources. Once you’ve done that, does the message still seem accurate? We can’t help slow the volume of information coming your way. But approaching information by asking and answering these questions can help you sort out what’s helpful...and what’s a scam.

So, for example, if the message is about a treatment or cure, you know where to go: Coronavirus.gov.

Bottom line: when you come across new — sometimes alarming — information, stop. Talk to someone else. Focus on whether the facts back up the information you’re hearing. Good, solid evidence will point you in the right direction. Then decide what you think and what you want to do with the message — pass it on, act on it, ignore it, or roll your eyes at it. And if you suspect a scam, tell the Federal Trade Commission so we can keep trying to shut the creeps down. bt

— Source: Federal Trade Commission (FTC)
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The circumstances surrounding the coronavirus are continuing to develop each day. This is a rapidly evolving situation and we encourage our members to exercise safety and caution. We are closely monitoring developments and offer the following information and guidance.

What to know about COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus):

The general risk remains low; however, there have been several confirmed cases across the country including two confirmed cases in Georgia (Our conference location).

In confirmed COVID-19 cases, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

According to the CDC, older adults and those with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19.

Please follow guidance from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization and U.S. State Department for recommendations and travel advisories.

Person-to-person spread is occurring, although it’s unclear exactly how it is transmitted and how easily the virus spreads between people.

The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

We could be in this state for an extended period of time and encourage you to plan accordingly for student and adult programming. Crisis ultimately breeds innovation. This is a unique opportunity for us to re-evaluate how we may still nurture and develop working professionals and future STEM leaders, all while being mindful of our members’ health, safety, and being intentionally inclusive of those without resources.

The National Executive Committee and Conference Team are working closely to assess the situation and consider the potential options for the conference. We are evaluating the development of a virtual conference experience. Our goal is to create an unmatched experience that retains the same energy, value, and diverse experience for all participants no matter the format the conference takes. Rest assured, we are continuously monitoring this developing situation and will continue to keep you all updated on plans for the conference experience as we move forward.

Sincerely,

Terry J. Morris, BDPA President

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