

Social Security Column

Social Security and OIG Partner for the Seventh Annual National Slam the Scam Day

The Social Security Administration (SSA) and its Office of the Inspector General (OIG) are partnering to fight back against Social Security imposter scams for the seventh annual “Slam the Scam” Day on March 5, 2026. The annual event, recognized as part of the Federal Trade Commission’s (FTC) National Consumer Protection Week, raises public awareness on the persistent and growing threat of Social Security impersonation scams that cost Americans hundreds of millions of dollars each year.

Government imposter scams – in which criminals falsely claim to represent SSA or other federal agencies to steal money or personal information – are among the most prevalent fraud schemes in the country. In 2025, the FTC received more than 330,000 complaints involving government impersonation, a 25 percent increase over the prior year. SSA remains one of the most frequently targeted agencies. In response, SSA is taking action through extensive outreach and investigative initiatives.

“All scams – especially imitations of the Social Security Administration – put Americans’ identity and financial security at risk,” said Commissioner Frank J. Bisignano. “National Slam the Scam Day is an important initiative in confronting the fraudsters who viciously target America’s seniors and most vulnerable. I encourage all Americans to remain vigilant, today and every day, as we work to spread awareness about the danger of scams.”

Criminals use sophisticated tactics to target potential victims into disclosing personal and financial information. Be skeptical and recognize the common red flags. Typically, they use these P’s – Pretend, Prize or Problem, Pressure, and Payment. For example, scammers pretend they are from Social Security in phone calls, texts, emails, websites, or direct

messages on social media, claiming there is an issue with the person’s Social Security benefits or Social Security number. The scammer’s caller ID may be spoofed to look like a legitimate government number. Scammers may also send fake documents to pressure people into complying with demands for information or money. Other common tactics include citing “badge numbers,” using fraudulent Social Security letterhead, and creating imposter social media pages to target individuals for payment or personal information.

“Scammers who impersonate the Social Security Administration prey on fear and a false sense of urgency to steal from hardworking Americans, causing real financial harm to individuals and families,” said Michelle L. Anderson, Assistant Inspector General for Audit as First Assistant performing the duties of the Inspector General. “Awareness is one of the strongest tools we have – we encourage consumers to take an intentional pause when they get a message they weren’t expecting, guard their wallet, verify, and report suspected scams – knowing the red flags can prevent devastating financial losses.”

The Social Security Administration will never tell you that your Social Security number is suspended; contact you to demand an immediate payment; threaten you with arrest; ask for your credit or debit card numbers over the phone; request gift cards or cash; or promise a Social Security benefit approval or increase in exchange for information or money.

Social Security employees do contact the public by telephone for business purposes. Ordinarily, the agency calls people who have recently applied for a Social Security benefit, are already receiving payments and require an update to their record, or have requested a phone call from the agency. If there is a problem with a person’s Social Security number or record, Social Security will typically mail a letter.

To report a scam attempt, go to oig.ssa.gov, visit www.ssa.gov/scam and www.ssa.gov/fraud.

8 Ways Climate Change Affects Health and How to Protect Yourself

By Becky Upham

The overwhelming scientific consensus, is that climate change is real and a serious threat to public health.

If you’re concerned about the health risks of climate change, it helps to stay aware and informed. Here are eight of the biggest health issues, with advice on what you can do to protect yourself and your family.

1. Extreme Heat Is Becoming Deadlier

Extreme heat is one of the clearest and most immediate health risks of climate change.

In recent decades, heat waves have already become hotter, occurred more often, and lasted longer. As global temperatures rise due to climate change, the United States is expected to continue to warm faster than other parts of the world.

Heat kills more people in the United States than any other type of extreme weather. Over the last 25 years, the number of heat-related deaths caused by conditions such as heatstroke has more than doubled, with a significant upswing since 2016.

Heat is sometimes called a “silent killer” because sustained high nighttime temperatures prevent the body from cooling during sleep — a key driver of heat-related deaths among older adults.

Extreme heat also strains the cardiovascular system. “Heat and pollution events are linked to higher rates of heart attack, stroke, and heart failure exacerbations,” says Lisa Patel, MD, executive director of the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health and associate professor of pediatrics at Stanford Medicine in California. Heat can also interfere with blood pressure and psychiatric medications, Dr. Patel adds.

How to Cope

When spending time outdoors in scorching weather, protect yourself by hydrating frequently,

avoiding the hottest time of day, and seeking shade when possible.

If you have heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease, or are pregnant, ask your healthcare provider how extreme heat could affect you. Review whether any medications you’re taking increase heat sensitivity or dehydration risk. Ask if you need a heat or air-quality action plan during summer months.

2. Climbing Temperatures May Hamper Good Sleep

Research shows that higher nighttime temperatures are linked to shorter sleep duration, more frequent awakenings, and less time spent in deep and REM sleep — the sleep stages most important for memory, mood regulation, and physical recovery.

Scientists project that as global temperatures rise, people could lose up to 24 hours of sleep per year by the end of the century due to heat exposure. Earlier research has similarly warned that warming trends could steadily erode sleep worldwide.

Sleep is when the body cools itself and repairs tissues. When nights stay hot, that cooling process is disrupted, particularly in densely built cities where pavement and buildings trap heat after sunset.

How to Cope

During hot weather, air conditioning is ideal to help you sleep better. If you don’t have A/C, other strategies for getting good sleep on a hot night include turning on a fan, taking a warm or tepid bath before bed, and using lightweight sheets and blankets made from natural material.

3. Wildfire Smoke Aggravates Respiratory Disease

Hotter temperatures and prolonged drought are fueling larger and more intense wildfires, which means increased wildfire smoke, says Alexander Rabin, MD, pulmonologist and clinical associate professor of pulmonary and

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