

SCAMS REPORT
MILTON TOWNSHIP S.A.L.T. COUNCIL MEETING JANUARY 10, 2022 (VIRTUAL)

Submitted by Arnold H. Shifrin

Airport Security Clearance Scam

Background: Scammers have devised unique ways to steal money and personal information (PI) from unsuspecting travelers who wish to reduce the time it takes to go through airport security.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are U.S. government agencies that offer expedited screening clearance through airport security for pre-approved, low-risk travelers. The TSA PreCheck® program provides expedited screening for passengers departing from U.S. airports. The CBP Global Entry program provides expedited screening for international air travelers entering the United States. Global Entry members also receive TSA PreCheck benefits as part of their membership.

How the scam works: Fraudsters set up bogus websites pretending to be the TSA or CBP. The logos and graphics of the bogus sites closely resemble those of the real agencies, leading potential victims to believe the sites are legitimate.

You receive an email appearing to originate from the TSA that offers you membership in the TSA PreCheck program. You're told that if your application is approved, your wait time to clear airport security will be significantly reduced. The prospect of spending less time going through airport security when you travel is appealing.

You're told you can apply for membership and pay the application and processing fees online. You find this arrangement very convenient and decide to apply. The application asks for your PI, and you willingly provide it because of the security implications. Once your application is approved and you are fingerprinted, you're told you'll be issued a Known Traveler Number (KTN). You're advised to provide the KTN whenever making airline reservations so your boarding passes show that you're entitled to expedited screening benefits.

If you comply with these instructions, the money you paid for the application and processing fees is lost and cannot be recovered. The PI you submitted on the application is used to steal your identity and withdraw money from your accounts. Your PI is also sold to other fraudsters for illicit purposes. You were clearly a victim of the scam and are not entitled to screening benefits at airports.

How to protect yourself:

- If you wish to apply for an airport screening program, go directly to the agency's website (tsa.gov or cbp.gov). Do not access sites whose web addresses (URL's) were provided by someone else.
- Make sure the agency's web address ends in ".gov." If it doesn't, you're dealing with a scammer.
- Be cautious of emails you receive with spelling and grammatical errors. You may be dealing with a scammer located in another country who has a poor command of the English language.
- Do not open attachments or click on links in emails from individuals claiming to represent the TSA or CBP. If you do, scammers can install malware on your device, making you vulnerable to identity theft.
- Do not respond to ads found on social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter).
- If you submit an application for expedited screening, use a credit card to pay the fees. Many credit card issuers offer assistance in resolving disputes if transactions turn out to be fraudulent.
- If you were a victim of this scam, report it to your local police department and the Federal Trade Commission (reportfraud.ftc.gov).

[Sources: FTC, Fox26]