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Food premise operators warned of inspection scam

CALGARY – Alberta Health Services (AHS) is warning food premise operators and staff of an ongoing scam involving individuals fraudulently posing as restaurant inspectors.

Over the past few weeks, AHS has received dozens of inquiries from food premise operators who have been contacted by callers claiming to be health inspectors. After attempting to verify personal/business information, the scammers advise the food premise operator that he/she will receive a follow-up call that provides an automated numeric code. The operator is instructed to write this code down, and relay to a subsequent caller who identifies him/herself as being from the “Health Department.” After requesting the numeric code, this caller attempts to schedule an in-person restaurant inspection and threatens fines if the food premise doesn’t cooperate.

Similar incidents have been reported in Ontario and British Columbia.

Alberta Health Services and food premise operators have informed law enforcement officials across the province. Investigations are ongoing.

“It is very important that our food premise operators be aware of this scam and report any suspicious calls to their local police or local public health office immediately,” says Dr. Gerry Predy, AHS Senior Medical Officer of Health. “Operators who suspect they may have unwittingly booked a fraudulent inspection should call the police and report these details as well.”

AHS Public Health Inspectors **do not call** to schedule inspections in advance, nor do they issue fines for failure to set up an inspection.

Food premise operators should always verify the identity and credentials of any individual claiming to be a Health Inspector. All legitimate AHS Health Inspectors carry Alberta Health Services (AHS) photo ID. If any individual claiming to be a Health Inspector cannot produce an AHS photo ID, the individual should be refused entry to the facility, and the operator/staff should place a call to police immediately.

For information on AHS restaurant inspections, contact your local public health office or visit <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/707.asp>

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.7 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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