

# NOW +

# NEXT

GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATIONS & WHITE COLLAR DEFENSE ALERT | NIXON PEABODY LLP

MARCH 19, 2020



## Federal prosecutors prioritize coronavirus-related fraud amid pandemic

By Robert Fisher and Charles Dell'Anno

Despite precautions instituted by federal courts, federal prosecutors are hard at work and focused on combatting criminal conduct related to the current pandemic. Any business or individual concerned that they have been exposed to such fraud should seek experienced legal counsel.

### Directive to prosecutors

“The pandemic is dangerous enough without wrongdoers seeking to profit from public panic and this sort of conduct cannot be tolerated.”

Attorney General Barr issued this mandate to all U.S. Attorneys in a March 16, 2020, policy memorandum, “[COVID-19 — Department of Justice Priorities](#).” The memorandum affirmed that the critical mission of the Department of Justice (“DOJ”) must continue during the pandemic. And an essential part of carrying out that mission, per the directive, is to immediately prioritize the detection, investigation, and prosecution of wrongdoing related to the coronavirus crisis.

Reported coronavirus-related fraud schemes include:

- selling fake cures for COVID-19;
- phishing scams posing as the World Health Organization or the Centers for Disease Control; and
- malware inserted onto mobile devices to track the spread of the virus.

All U.S. Attorney’s Offices are encouraged to coordinate national strategy with Main Justice and cooperate with state and local authorities to ensure swift and effective enforcement.

### Companies and individuals must be vigilant

Any company or individual that is concerned they have been the victim of coronavirus-related fraud should act immediately by engaging legal counsel. As this DOJ policy directs, enforcement action in this area will happen quickly.

Nixon Peabody’s [Government Investigations and White Collar Defense Practice Group](#) has experienced attorneys who can help mitigate any exposure and facilitate swift and effective

This newsletter is intended as an information source for the clients and friends of Nixon Peabody LLP. The content should not be construed as legal advice, and readers should not act upon information in the publication without professional counsel. This material may be considered advertising under certain rules of professional conduct. Copyright © 2020 Nixon Peabody LLP. All rights reserved.

coordination with federal prosecutors and law enforcement agencies. In fact, we recently assisted a domestic client successfully recover approximately \$150,000 from a Hong Kong bank that was stolen via a sophisticated email phishing scheme. Our firm is ready and prepared to assist and advise companies and individuals across the country.

For more information on the content of this alert, please contact our [Coronavirus Response Team](#), your Nixon Peabody attorney, or:

- Robert Fisher at [rfisher@nixonpeabody.com](mailto:rfisher@nixonpeabody.com) or 617-345-1335
- Charles Dell'Anno at [cdellanno@nixonpeabody.com](mailto:cdellanno@nixonpeabody.com) or 617-345-1097