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## CROSS-SECTOR

LIR 200323006

### Criminals Exploiting COVID-19 Outbreak for Financial Gain through Procurement and Consumer Fraud

The FBI Criminal Investigative Division (CID), in coordination with the Office of Private Sector (OPS), prepared this LIR to address criminal exploitation of the global supply chain disruptions and manufacturing shortages resulting from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Recent reporting from multiple sources indicates an increase in financial fraud schemes, as scammers have seized upon the ever-growing demand for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)<sup>a</sup> to target healthcare providers and the general public. Many of the schemes attempt to capitalize on high demand, low supply PPE such as N95 National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-approved respirator masks, which are among the required PPE for healthcare personnel responding to COVID-19.

The FBI has identified the following proactive measures for consumers and procurement personnel to help mitigate financial loss or the purchase of potentially harmful counterfeit N95 masks. These recommendations are not meant to be an exhaustive list of guidance regarding COVID-19:

- When ordering PPE from online retailers, always verify the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) and confirm "https" in the web address, as a lack of a security certification ("https") may be an indicator that the site is insecure or compromised
- Consult the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) NIOSH website to view a list of all NIOSH approved manufacturers of N95 respirator masks and validate approval and certification numbers<sup>b</sup>
- Confirm N95 respirator mask approval status and certification numbers using the NIOSH flyer (Figure 1), the NIOSH website, or the CDC website, which includes examples of identified counterfeit or unapproved N95 respirator masks<sup>c</sup>
- If procuring other categories of PPE such as gowns, gloves, goggles, and face shields, consult the manufacturer to verify authenticity and availability
- Be wary of unprompted solicitations to purchase large quantities of PPE and do not provide usernames, passwords, personal identifying information (PII) such as social security number and date of birth, or financial information in response to an email or robocall

<sup>a</sup> Personal Protective Equipment is defined by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) as, "specialized clothing or equipment, worn by an employee for protection against infectious materials." The CDC has identified gowns, gloves, goggles or full-face shields, and N95 respirator masks as required PPE for COVID-19.

<sup>b</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp\\_part/default.html](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp_part/default.html)

<sup>c</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/usernotices/counterfeitResp.html>