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CONFIDENTIAL PATIENT INFORMATION SCAM

BISMARCK – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem is warning North Dakota hospitals of a scam requesting confidential patient information such as patient social security numbers.

A scam artist representing herself as a nurse in a Salt Lake City, Utah hospital is contacting North Dakota hospitals and requesting confidential information about North Dakota patients. The inquiries claim the patient has appeared in the caller's emergency room, or owes an outstanding emergency room bill, or may allege some other reasons for needing the information. In some instances it appears the patients inquired about had recently died.

The scam artist is requesting verification of social security numbers, dates of birth, telephone numbers, etc. "Con artists obviously are attempting to obtain social security numbers and other confidential information for illegal purposes, and are most likely targeting these patients for identity theft. Healthcare facilities should not give out any patient information under any circumstances," Stenehjem said.

Parrell Grossman, Director of the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, indicated that the Attorney General's Office is working closely with the North Dakota Healthcare Association in investigating this matter. "If any healthcare facility has provided confidential patient information as a result of one of these calls, it is important to immediately notify the patient or family members so that precautionary measures may be taken to prevent identity theft," Grossman said.

Hospital personnel or consumers with questions should contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division toll-free at 1-800-472-2600, or the North Dakota Healthcare Association at 701-224-9732.