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## AARP Launches Campaign to Root Out Social Media Scams

Fraud Watch Network Ambassador Frank Abagnale Provides Tips on How to Avoid Identity Theft and Fraud



**WASHINGTON, DC**—With scams and fraud schemes proliferating on social media, the AARP **Fraud Watch Network** has launched a campaign to educate Americans about social media hazards and provide information about how they can protect themselves.

"Scammers have been using email and telephone calls to target unsuspecting victims for years. Now, with today's boom in social media use, the con artists are just as likely to use Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms to execute their insidious scams to steal people's money and identities," said AARP Fraud Watch Network Ambassador Frank Abagnale. According to the **Pew Research Center**, approximately 70 percent of Americans regularly use social media.

The Fraud Watch Network education campaign includes advertising, online videos and a new website, [www.aarp.org/SocialScams](http://www.aarp.org/SocialScams). The effort warns consumers about specific social media scams, such as the *coupon scam* and the *genealogy scam*:

- Fraudsters execute the **coupon scam** by distributing advertisements featuring too-good-to-be-true deals on hot items. The real goal is to charge your credit card for phony goods or products you never receive, or to collect your personal information for identity theft.
- The genealogy scam capitalizes on the current popularity of ancestry research. Scammers set up a legitimate-looking website and social media account – often mimicking the name of an authentic genealogy site by altering a character or two of the name. Victims are duped into providing their credit card information, Social Security numbers and other personal information to the identity thieves.

Abagnale provides the following **tips** to avoid identity theft via social media:

- Never post personal information, including your Social Security number – not even the last four digits -- birthday, place of birth, home address, phone numbers, or personal account information.
- Avoid posting a front-facing picture of your full face on social media sites. A con artist can copy the image and use it to create a photo ID that can be used to steal your identity.
- Set the privacy options for each of your social media accounts to restrict your information so it can only be viewed by people you select. Check your privacy settings regularly.
- Don't log in to your social media accounts via a public wireless network, where scammers can lurk. A 2016 **survey** by the AARP Fraud Watch Network found that more than 70 percent of the respondents have accessed their email, Facebook and other social media accounts via free public Wi-Fi.

Abagnale, who was named AARP Fraud Watch Ambassador in 2015, has been associated with the FBI for more than four decades, and has advised and consulted with hundreds of financial institutions, corporations and government agencies around the world. Abagnale's story was told in his best-selling book, *Catch Me if You Can*,

and in the 2002 movie of the same name, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks.

The **AARP Fraud Watch Network** was launched in 2013 as a free resource for people of all ages. The website provides information about fraud and scams, prevention tips from experts, an interactive **scam-tracking map**, fun educational quizzes, and video **presentations** featuring Abagnale. Users may sign up for “Watchdog Alert” emails that deliver breaking scam information, or call a free helpline at 877-908-3360 to speak with volunteers trained in fraud counseling.

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#### **About AARP**

*AARP is the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the world’s largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org) or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.*

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