EM - Emergency Message

Identification: EM-21034 SEN
Number: EM-21034 SEN
Intended Audience: All RCs/ARCs/ADs/FOs
Originating Office: DCO OEST
Title: Elevated eService Block Removal - Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)
Type: EM - Emergency Messages
Program: All Programs
Link To Reference: See References at the end of this EM

Effective Date: 05/05/2021

Retention Date: October 14, 2021

A. Purpose

During the COVID-19 pandemic, SSA is providing service through online, telephone, and mail service channels with limited in-person services. We want to ensure customers can continue to access our services through online channels, such as my Social Security. Customers who have an eServices block on their account are unable to access these vital online services. Due to the current operating status, customers who would like to request removal of an elevated (restricted or suspended) eService block should not visit a local field office (FO) in order to remove the block. The following instructions provide an interim solution, without the need to visit an FO, to assist customers with removing elevated eServices blocks in order to access my Social Security.

B. Background

Customers have the ability to voluntarily add a standard electronic services block to their Social Security information, including my Social Security. If a customer with a standard electronic services block asks us to remove the block and we deny the request, we establish an elevated block on the account. We establish an elevated block for any of the following reasons:

- Registration and Customer Support (RCS) user is unable to verify the requesting customer’s identity;
- SSA employee is suspicious of the caller’s identity (see OA 00220.004);
- Customer’s record indicates fraud is involved; and/or
- Requester is not an acceptable requester (see OA 00220.070B).

Once the restricted block is in place, removal requires an in-person interview...
unless we identify the caller as an “alternative service” customer (individuals who are restricted from visiting the FO), or the caller is unable to travel to an FO due to extenuating circumstances to fulfill a request (OA 00220.005I).

C. Instructions for Field Office Managers or Appointed Field Office Employees to Remove the Elevated eServices Block When the Customer’s Phone Number Is Already Established on SSA Records

Follow the existing procedures in OA 00220.005I, to verify the caller’s identity and allow all customers to remove the elevated block via telephone. Do not ask customers to come into local offices to remove their eServices block. If the customer requests that SSA remove the electronic block, ensure that he or she understands the potential consequences. Explain to the customer that when we remove the block, we may be exposing their record to potential fraudulent activity.

IMPORTANT: These procedures to remove an elevated eServices block via telephone apply to FO managers and appointed field office employees only. Processing Center (PC), National 800 Number (N8NN), and Workload Support Unit (WSU) employees should refer customers to their local FO in order to remove elevated eService blocks.

1. To comply with the requirements in OA 00220.005I, you must call the customer back using the phone number already established on our records and follow the procedures in OA 00220.075 to remove the elevated block.
Employees to Remove the Elevated eServices Block When the Customer’s Phone Number Is NOT Already Established on SSA Records

1. Refer to Registration and Customer Support (RCS) Elevated Phone Identity Verification (EPIV) EM-21033 SEN.
   a. Once the confirmation code is verified remove the eService block by following steps in Section C.2
   b. If the confirmation code is not verified, STOP. The eService block cannot be removed.

IMPORTANT: This process to remove elevated eService blocks over the phone only applies while the FOs are under the current operating status due to COVID-19.

NOTE: Assist current account holders with standard (non-elevated) eServices blocks via existing RCS policy. See OA 00220.075.

Direct all program-related and technical questions to your Regional Office (RO) support staff or Program Service Center (PSC) Operations Analysis (OA) staff. RO support staff or PSC OA staff may refer questions, concerns or problems to their Central Office contacts.

References:

OA 00220.004 Handling a Suspicious Caller Who Requests Changes to the Record

OA 00220.005 Customer Reports or SSA Suspects Fraudulent Activity

OA 00220.070 Block All Electronic Access to a Customer’s Personal Information Using RCS

OA 00220.075 Unblock All Electronic Access to a Customer’s Personal Information Using RCS

OA 00220.080 Deny a Request to Unblock All Electronic Access to a Customer’s Personal Information Using RCS

GN 03380.005 Verifying Identity of Individuals Making Access Requests

GN 03340.015 Access Requirements

Link to this document:
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