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For further information, contact:

Jennifer Sobotta, VP/Marketing Director

Forward Bank

Phone: (715) 389-7198

Email: jennifers@forwardbank.com

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Beware of QR Code Fraud/Scams

In today's fast-paced digital world, QR codes (Quick Response Codes) have become a popular and convenient way to access information, make payments, and interact with businesses. These scannable barcodes can direct users to websites, menus, parking payment portals, and more. While they offer convenience, they also present an opportunity for fraudsters to exploit unsuspecting users.

Scammers are increasingly using QR codes as a tool to execute their fraudulent schemes. By creating fake QR codes, they can deceive individuals into visiting fraudulent websites or downloading malicious software. These scams can compromise your personal information and even lead to financial loss. Fraudsters may replace legitimate QR codes with counterfeit ones in public places such as parking garages, on meters, or through fake posters. Additionally, they may send unsolicited texts or emails with fraudulent QR codes, pretending to represent delivery services or other legitimate organizations.

To protect yourself from QR code-related scams, follow these important tips:

1. **Verify the Source:** Ensure the QR code originates from a trusted and reliable source. Hover over the QR code and review the URL before proceeding.
2. **Inspect for Tampering:** Look for any signs of tampering, such as stickers placed over legitimate codes. If something seems suspicious, do not scan the QR code.
3. **Be Cautious with Unsolicited Codes:** Avoid scanning QR codes received via unsolicited texts or emails, especially if the sender is unknown or unverified.
4. **Beware of Urgent Requests:** Scammers often use urgency to prompt immediate action. Be wary of QR codes accompanied by urgent requests for payment or sensitive information.

5. **Protect Personal and Financial Information:** Never input personal or financial details on websites accessed via QR codes unless you are absolutely certain of their legitimacy.
6. **Secure Your Business's QR Codes:** If you operate a business, regularly audit the QR codes you display to customers. Use secure, verifiable codes that can be updated as needed.

QR codes are a powerful tool when used responsibly, but it is essential to remain vigilant. By taking simple precautions, you can protect yourself from becoming a victim of QR code fraud. Stay informed and stay safe.

For more information on how to avoid scams, visit the Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Protection website (<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov>).

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