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FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION  
consumer news



## COVID-19 One Year Later

# Thriving in a Socially Distanced Banking Environment

In April 2020, the FDIC published a special edition of Consumer News, “COVID-19 and Your Financial Health,” with information to help keep consumers and their money safe by banking remotely. One year later, both banks and consumers have adapted. More financial institutions are offering consumers a wide range of online applications and more consumers are taking advantage of available financial technology.

Today, the number of consumers taking advantage of digital banking services has increased, and during the pandemic many new checking accounts were opened online or through a mobile device. Some of these accounts were opened by consumers who were eligible to receive federal financial assistance, or economic impact payments (EIPs), and wanted to receive the money faster electronically via direct deposit into an FDIC-insured bank account. The FDIC worked along with bank trade associations and nonprofit partners to

help thousands of consumers begin or re-establish a banking relationship. For more information, visit FDIC’s [#GetBanked](#).

The following information remains important as consumers manage their financial lives while navigating through the pandemic. (Note to readers: some of the information below was previously published in [April 2020](#).)

### Social Distancing & Mobile Banking Technology

Advances in mobile banking technology enable consumers to exercise social distancing (<https://directorsblog.nih.gov/2020/03/19/to-beat-covid-19-social-distancing-is-a-must/>) while conducting banking transactions. Banking technology and services provide the convenience of conducting banking transactions with your computer, smartphone, or other mobile device. If you aren’t using these services, ask your bank if the following are available to you and how you can use them:

**Money Transfer Services:** Person-to-person payment services and mobile payment apps have become part of everyday life for many people. Payment services and apps let you send money to people without having to write a check, swipe a card, or hand them cash.

**Online Bill Pay Services:** These programs generally allow you to sign up on your bank’s website to receive and/or pay bills electronically from the companies with whom you do business.

**Depositing checks using Remote Deposit Capture:** Many banks allow customers to use Remote Deposit Capture (RDC), which allows customers to take a picture of a check with their mobile device and deposit that check electronically without having to visit a branch or use an ATM.

You can find additional tips on mobile banking technology by visiting:

<https://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/news/october2019.html>.

### #GetBanked

**Avoid waiting in line with mobile banking:**

Many FDIC-insured banks have options to open an account online. You can also schedule an appointment to open an account in-person at your local bank branch. Learn more at [#GetBanked](#).

**Receive benefits faster:** Customers with bank accounts are able to sign up for direct deposit or payments with federal, state, and local government agencies. Once enrolled, consumers who are eligible for financial assistance (e.g., economic impact payments and unemployment benefits) receive their money faster than those who have to wait for paper checks that are mailed <https://www.fdic.gov/coronavirus/faq-customer.pdf>.

### Safest place to keep your money

Some banks may have adjusted hours or services to observe Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance on social distancing, but that doesn't change the fact that an FDIC-insured account remains the safest place for you to keep your money. The FDIC's [Electronic Deposit Insurance Estimator \(EDIE\)](#) can help you determine deposit insurance coverage based on accounts you already have with a bank or accounts you are considering opening. Find additional help using EDIE at [FDIC deposit insurance coverage](#).

As a reminder, keeping large sums of cash in your home is not advisable because it puts these funds at risk of theft, fire, flood, loss, or damage.

### Financial difficulty resulting from the pandemic

Areas across the United States are undergoing temporary closure (or limiting the hours of operation) of schools, businesses, and events in an effort to reduce the potential exposure to COVID-19. Although such measures are necessary to contain

the spread of this pandemic, many may experience loss of income or impacts to their workplace. The FDIC is encouraging banks to work with their customers experiencing the impact of COVID-19 by, for example, allowing them to temporarily skip loan payments, extend loan terms, and restructure loans. Contact your bank to discuss your options before skipping any payments or taking any other action contrary to the terms of your loan.

- If you do not think you can pay your loan payments on time, immediately contact your bank. Paying your debts late or not at all can result in penalties, interest charges, and damage to your credit score. Banks are often able to work with their customers on a solution, but it is important to contact your bank as soon as possible and explain your situation.
- If you have a complaint about your bank, be proactive. First, contact the bank directly. If that is not effective, you may contact the appropriate federal or state regulatory agency for help or guidance, including the FDIC at <https://ask.fdic.gov/fdicinformationandsupportcenter/s/>.

### COVID-19 related scams

Unfortunately, some people may take advantage of COVID-19 by using fraudulent websites, phone calls, emails, and text messages. While claiming to offer "help," they may be trying to trick people into providing Social Security numbers, bank account numbers, and other personal information. Do not divulge your bank or credit card numbers or any other personal information over the phone unless you initiated the conversation with the other party and you know that it is a reputable organization.

In addition, you should be cautious about online solicitations. Be on guard against imposters who contact you claiming to be government employees or volunteers and who ask for personal financial information or money. Learn more about how to protect yourself from these scams from the March 2020 edition of Consumer News:

<https://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/news/march2020.html>.

Reject offers to cash a check for someone in exchange for a fee, even if the bank makes the funds available to you right away, as it may later turn out that the check was fraudulent. Read more about fake checks in the August 2019 edition of Consumer News: <https://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/news/august2019.html>.

Knowing your banking technology options, keeping your money in a safe place, and recognizing COVID-19 scams can help you maintain your finances through the pandemic.

### Additional resources and FDIC Consumer News highlighted during the past year:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Information for Bankers and Consumers](#)

[Getting Beyond the Tough Times](#)

[Banking with Apps](#)

[Beware, It's a Scam!](#)

[Working Through Financial Difficulty](#)

[No Cash Payments? Now What?](#)

[Is Digital Banking for Me?](#)

For more help or information, go to [www.fdic.gov](http://www.fdic.gov) or call the FDIC toll-free at 1-877-ASK-FDIC (1-877-275-3342). Please send your story ideas or comments to Consumer Affairs at [consumeraffairsmailbox@fdic.gov](mailto:consumeraffairsmailbox@fdic.gov)

