That Money Network Envelope Isn’t Spam; It’s Your Stimulus Debit Card

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If that headline weren’t emphatic enough, let us reiterate: Do not throw away an envelope with a return address from Money Network Cardholder Services, particularly if you have yet to receive your one-time stimulus payment from the federal government as promised in the CARES Act. Odds are that envelope contains your cash infusion — up to $1,200 for individuals — in the form of a debit card issued by the IRS, via an agency-selected institution called MetaBank.

The problem is that, prior to yesterday, most recipients had no expectation that such a card (as opposed to the direct-deposit payment or paper check received by the majority of American taxpayers and households) would arrive, unless they were really diligent about following U.S. Treasury press releases. (And even then, guidance on who should anticipate a card and how they could distinguish it from solicitous mail was vague.)

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Consequently, confusion has reigned. As reported in regional outlets including the *Miami Herald* and *Atlanta Journal-*

Constitution, some stimulus beneficiaries have been throwing the envelopes away or nearly tossing them before taking steps to authenticate their origins.

To wit, one Texas resident told the *Herald*, "At first glance you would throw it away. You would. Especially if Money Network is not your bank. It's not my bank and no one I do business with."

And even in cases where a person opened the envelope and peered inside, there have been accounts of trepidation. A woman in Iowa who cares for her elderly parents told her local NBC affiliate, "My dad had this card. And he goes, 'Can you figure this out?' He's a World War II vet, and he can't see or hear very well. He has no computer skills. So I said, that's a credit card, and he goes, 'Well, I read over this with my magnifying glass and it says that's my stimulus payment.'"

In response to the disconnect, the IRS just yesterday posted an updated "COVID Tax Top" to its website clarifying the nature of its relationship with both Money Network and MetaBank and itemizing that recipients can use the debit card as follows:

- Make purchases online and at any retail location where Visa is accepted.
- Get cash from in-network ATMs.
- Transfer funds to their personal bank account.
- Check their card balance online, by mobile app or by phone.

And if you did happen to discard your envelope in the trash, don't fret – too much. You can call Money Network's customer-service line at 1-800-240-8100.

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So to summarize, the IRS – on instructions from the Bureau of the Fiscal Service – outsourced the issuing of millions of stimulus debit cards in clandestine envelopes to both Money Network Cardholder Services and MetaBank, and you can call Money Network if there are any questions or concerns (but not MetaBank or the IRS, because they will both just direct you back to Money Network). Otherwise, happy spending.

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