October is
National Cybersecurity Awareness Month
"Do Your Part. #BeCyberSmart."

Chapter 1: Watch out for Fraudulent QR Codes

What are QR Codes?

A QR code is a type of barcode that can be read easily by a digital device and which stores information as a series of pixels in a square-shaped grid. QR codes are frequently used to track information about products in a supply chain and, because many smartphones have built-in QR readers, they are often used in marketing and advertising campaigns.

Today many businesses have adopted using QR codes to point consumers to their apps, track packages, or view menus. However, because the human eye cannot read these codes, they have become a way for scammers to disguise malicious links. As QR codes become more popular, they are increasingly becoming a tool for back actors to use to mislead consumers.

How to Avoid QR Scams

- **Do not open links from strangers.** If you receive an unsolicited message from a stranger, do not scan the QR code, even if they promise you exciting gifts or investment opportunities.
- **Verify the source.** If a QR code appears to come from a reputable source, it is wise to double check. If the correspondence appears to come from a government agency, call or visit their official website to confirm.
- **Be wary of short links.** If a URL-shortened link appears when you scan a QR code, understand that you cannot know where the code is directing you. It could be hiding a malicious URL.
- **Watch out for advertising materials that have been tampered with.** Some scammers attempt to mislead consumers by altering legitimate business ads by placing stickers or the QR code. Keep an eye out for signs of tampering.
- **Install a QR scanner with added security.** Some antivirus companies have QR scanner apps that check the safety of a scanned link before you open it. They can identify phishing scams, forced app downloads, and other dangerous links.

Sources:

NIST Special Publication 800-124 Revision 1 Guidelines for Managing the Security of Mobile Devices

www.bbb.org