

FRAUD ALERT!

Scammers pose as grandchildren to dupe unsuspecting grandparents

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) is warning senior citizens to be aware of an emerging telephone scam that is preying on grandparents nationwide. BBB has recently received reports about grandparents who thought they were aiding their grandchildren by providing money for an emergency situation but were in fact giving thousands of dollars to Canadian con artists.

Generally, the scam works like this – the grandparent receives a distressed phone call from who they believe is their grandchild. The supposed grandchild typically explains that they are traveling in Canada and have been arrested or involved in an auto accident and need the grandparent to wire money to post bail or pay for damages—usually amounting to a few thousand dollars. While many seniors have reported the scam without falling prey to it, unfortunately, many others have been victimized. One well-meaning grandmother sent \$15,000 to scammers, thinking she was helping a grandchild who had been in an auto accident.

Law enforcement officials are not certain how perpetrators are obtaining phone numbers for so many senior citizens across the U.S. However, it is believed that scammers are most likely calling random numbers until they happen to reach a senior citizen. The scammers' basic tactic is to pose as a grandchild and let the unsuspecting grandparent fill in the blanks. For example, the scam caller might say, "It's me, your favorite grandchild," to which the grandparent will guess the name of the grandchild it sounds the most like, and then the call proceeds from there.

The key to avoiding this scam is to:

- Remain calm despite the 'emergency' nature of the call and try to verify the identity of the caller. Too often, people allow themselves to get caught up in the false sense of urgency and they end up making emotional, instead of logical, decisions.
- Confirm the status of the individual by calling them directly or verifying the story with other family members before taking any further action.
- A request to wire money through Western Union or MoneyGram is a "red flag" and an immediate tip-off that the call may be part of a scam. Funds sent via wire transfer are hard to track once received by scammers and are usually not recoverable by law enforcement or banking officials.

For anyone victimized by this type of distressed loved-one call, report the incident immediately to local police departments and state Attorneys General offices. If there is a request to wire money to Canada, the Canadian Anti-Fraud Call Centre has established a toll free hotline at 1-888-495-8501.

BUCKS COUNTY CRIMES AGAINST OLDER ADULTS TASK FORCE

FIGHTING ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND EXPLOITATION OF OLDER ADULTS IN BUCKS COUNTY

Bucks County District Attorney's Office

215-348-6344

Bucks County Consumer Protection

215-348-6060

Bucks County Register of Wills

215-348-6265

Bucks County Area Agency on Aging

215-348-0510

Network of Victim Assistance

1-800-675-6900

Bucks County Coroner

215-348-3852

www.crimesagainstolderadultsbucks.org

24-Hour Elder Abuse Hotline: 1-800-490-8505