

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE _____

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SUFFOLK POLICE DEPARTMENT WARNS CITIZENS ABOUT TELEPHONE SCAMS AND FRAUD INCIDENTS

SUFFOLK, VA (March 6, 2020) It is that time of year again when people are filing taxes and scammers are looking to steal from those vulnerable enough to believe the scams. The Suffolk Police Department would like to warn citizens about recent incidents of telephone fraud and scams that have unfortunately caused citizens to lose money, sometimes in the thousands of dollars, in the hopes of preventing others from being victimized.

Callers claiming to be Police Officers, Treasury Department officials, IRS Agents or Sheriff's Deputies have recently scammed local victims, but this is a national and even international problem.

In recent local incidents the victims advise that the person is telling them that they've missed jury duty and they need to pay a fine or spend one day in jail. The victims are then being told to put \$1,000 on a prepaid card while they are on the phone with the individual. If they hang up, the scammer then threatens to send someone out to arrest them. Once this money is on the card, the victims are asked to read the card number off to the person who is impersonating the officer so that he can verify the money went into the kiosk. The victim is then out

\$1,000. Officers have reminded the public this is a scam, and correspondence regarding jury duty is always done through the mail.

Other scams include miracle cures, sweepstakes prizes, chances to earn enormous profits from supposedly no-risk, high-yield business and investment opportunities and more. You can be sure it's a scam if they ask for money or personal information, especially if they use scare tactics.

You should be suspicious of all solicitors, especially if the caller says any of the following:

- You've won a prize or lottery and that you need to send money first or provide bank account information to get your winnings.
- You have to act right away. Remember, if it's a good deal today it will still be a good deal tomorrow. Don't let anyone rush you into signing anything.
- He or she is a law enforcement officer and threatens to arrest you if you don't pay a fine for a bogus charge, for example, a speeding violation caught on camera or a failure to appear for jury duty. Payments are usually requested by prepaid debit card or money order. The scammer might use the name of a real officer or department to make the call convincing. No law enforcement employee will ever contact you to demand money or any other form of payment. Hang up immediately if you get this kind of call.
- He or she is calling from the Security and Fraud Department of your credit or debit card company and asks you for the 3-digit security number on the back of your credit card to verify your possession of the card to aid in a supposed fraud investigation. Never give out this information unless you are the person initiating a transaction.
- He or she is calling from Microsoft or some other legitimate company to warn you that your computer has a security problem and offer a free security check. You may then be tricked into allowing access to your

computer, downloading malware, giving out credit card information, or buying some software or services you don't need.

- You owe taxes and must pay with a pre-paid debit card or wire transfer. The scammers, claiming to be with the IRS, threaten those who refuse to pay with arrest, deportation, or loss of a business or driver's license. The truth is that the IRS usually contacts people by mail first about unpaid taxes. It won't contact you by phone and it won't ask for payment using a pre-paid debit card or wire transfer or credit card information over the phone.

Hang up immediately if the caller is rude or threatening. If you receive repeated harassing calls, or calls in which you are threatened with physical harm and think the threat is real, report them to the Suffolk Police Department on the non-emergency number, 923-2350.

As a final reminder, never give out personal information over the phone, including your credit or debit card number, passwords or pin numbers, checking account number, Social Security or Medicare number, or any personal information to an unknown caller. Banks do not use an automated system to ask for this type of customer information regarding their accounts. Banks already have customer account information, and therefore do not need to ask for this information over the phone. Never give out the 3-digit security number on the back of your credit or debit card unless you have initiated a card purchase and the seller asks for it to verify your possession of the card. Just say "no" and hang up on anyone who asks for personal information. Don't ever assume a friendly voice belongs to a friend.

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