
NEWS RELEASE

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Date: 08/16/2013
TDD: 791-2639

FRAUDULENT PHONE SCAMS

The Tucson Police Departments Fraud/Economic Crimes Unit would like to notify the public of certain types of schemes that are currently being used to defraud victims of money. The schemes can involve any of the following scenarios:

- A person posing as a relative (son, daughter, grandchild) contacts a citizen claiming to be involved in an accident, usually in a foreign country. Using the Internet, the caller may be able to obtain the names of a citizens relatives and identify themselves as that specific person.

-The suspect tells the citizen that they need money to pay for court fees, lawyer fees, or hospital bills. Fines have to be paid to prevent going to jail or to get their confiscated Visa that will allow them to return to the U.S. The person posing as the family member will tell the citizen that he or she doesn't want anyone else contacted. This will limit the citizen from calling anyone to substantiate the false claim. The citizen is told to go to any of the businesses that send money electronically (Money Gram, Western Union, etc). The suspect may also tell the citizen to purchase a prepaid Visa or Green Dot card and give the suspect the receipt number. The suspect will instruct the victim to scratch the back of the purchased card and give the numbers over the phone so the suspect can claim the money. The suspect will tell the citizen to call as soon as the money is sent to ensure they get the funds prior to any court proceedings. Always confirm the information you are receiving about a relative **especially** if the caller tells you not to contact anyone else.

- A caller claiming to be an employee of Tucson Electric Power (TEP) contacts a customer (business or residential) and says that their electric service is in danger of being shut off because of unpaid bills. In most cases, the caller instructs the customer to purchase a pre-paid gift card or Green Dot card and then call a specific number to avoid loss of service.

-TEP customer representatives will only contact customers by phone with bill payment reminders as a courtesy. In cases where customers are behind on their payments, TEP first sends pink disconnect notices before shutting off electric service. TEP never asks customers to purchase pre-paid money cards to pay a monthly bill.



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- A person claiming to be Law Enforcement contacts a victim and advises that if they don't immediately pay for fines on their outstanding warrants, an officer will show up at their home and arrest them. Again the caller demands to be paid either electronically or by a pre-paid gift card.

-Law enforcement does not solicit money over the phone for criminal warrants.

- A citizen answers an ad on a public website such as Craigslist or Ebay for a job opportunity or to purchase or sell an item.

-A common type of scam involves an ad for employment. For example, a citizen answers an ad for a Nanny or Assistant type of job for a person or business out of town that is coming to Tucson. The person posing as an employer, employs the citizen and sends a check for a large amount of money (normally several thousand dollars). The citizen is told to cash the check, buy some supplies for the job (diapers, baby food, etc), keep a set amount for their pay and forward the remainder to another person in the continental United States. The citizen's bank confirms the account has funds to complete the transaction and cashes the check for the citizen. It is not until days later after the citizen sends the remaining money to another location, that the bank discovers the check was fraudulent or stolen.

This same type of scam is used when people buy items online as well. For example, a fake website is created and linked to legit website (such as Ebay or Craigslist). As the citizen inquires about a specific vehicle online, a pop-up appears that links the citizen to another website which has a vehicle very similar to the one they are inquiring about for several thousand dollars less. The citizen, thinking they are working with a legit website, pays for the vehicle through the Internet. When the suspect receives the money, the website is deleted and the citizen never receives the vehicle.

In another scam, a citizen answers an ad online for a job and is hired by a business from out of state. The citizen is told he or she is employed and is going to receive boxes full of purchased items. The citizen is supposed to open the boxes and ship them to different locations using new labels. These items are usually purchased with stolen credit card information so the citizen is unknowingly involved in trafficking in stolen property. The suspect uses the citizen to remove himself or herself from the process of shipping so the items cannot be traced back to the suspect.

When using programs such as Craigslist, Ebay or any related type of website on the Internet, ask questions of the ads or inquiries to your ad. If something seems odd, then it probably is. Also, if it seems too good to be true, then it is. When a citizen questions an ad or a response to their ad, research can be done online regarding the person or the business the citizen is dealing with to ensure the information is legitimate.

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For accommodations; materials in accessible formats; foreign language interpreters; and/or materials in a language other than English, please contact the Tucson Police Department Public Information Office at (520) 791-4852 or (520) 791-2639 for TDD at least five (5) business days in advance. Para arreglos; materiales en formatos accesibles; interpretes de idioma extranjero; y/o materiales en otro idioma que no sea inglés, por favor comunicarse al Departamento de la Policía de Tucson a la sección de Información Pública al (520) 791-4852 o (520) 791-2639 para TDD por lo menos con cinco (5) días hábiles de anticipación.