



HALL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

CRIME PREVENTION UNIT



CRIME PREVENTION BULLETIN

DATE: April 13, 2011
SUBJECT: Telephone Scam

We've recently had a number of complaints regarding a telephone scam that is targeting our older generations in particular. Unfortunately, many criminals see the elderly as their preferred victims because of what they perceive as a more trusting nature or their lack of knowledge about new technology. While some scams are aimed at fraud or identity theft, others go directly for the cash. With this one, the criminals are hoping to prey upon the victim's unconditional love of a family member to cheat them out of their money. Here's how it works:

- 1) The criminal telephones the intended victim and introduces themselves as a friend of their grandson or granddaughter.
- 2) They relate a concocted story about how they were off on a trip somewhere (on vacation, away at college, etc.) with the victim's grandchild, and the victim's grandchild somehow got into trouble with the law, landing in the local jail in that jurisdiction.
- 3) The criminal says that they don't have enough cash to post bond for the victim's grandchild, and they need a certain amount of money to be wired to them as soon as possible.

While some blind calling to multiple residences in retirement communities is not unheard of and may work in some cases, this scam is more likely to be successful when the criminal does a little homework to find out if their intended target actually has grandkids, how old they are and where they are. This may be accomplished any number of ways, including first-hand knowledge, getting information through acquaintances or family members, or online (think about Facebook and all of the family information that can be discovered there).

Here are some prevention tips:

- Unless you actually know the caller, never simply take their word that someone you know is in jail. Ask the caller for the location of the jail, and look that number up for yourself in a phone book or online (don't ask the caller for the number- they may have someone on standby to act the part when you call). If you can't find the number, call your local law enforcement dispatch and ask them to provide it (Hall County is 770-536-8812). Then simply call that jail and ask; they'll be glad to tell you.
- While in this instance we're talking specifically about jail bond issues, don't let your focus remain that narrow. The basic principles of this scam could be modified to fit many situations, such as vehicle break-downs ("we need money to pay a tow truck..."), etc. A clever criminal will use their imagination.
- Ultimately, prevention is simple: If the information isn't coming from what you know to be a reliable source, verify anything that you don't know first-hand.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

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