



Vacaville Police Department

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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VACAVILLE PD SEES RISE IN NUMBER, TYPE OF SCAMS HITTING COMMUNITY

The Vacaville Police Department has seen a sharp increase in the number of scams currently being utilized in our community. These scams are mostly aimed at senior citizens, but they could happen to anyone. Recently, two elderly residents in Vacaville were scammed out of over \$300,000 in a few short months.

Here are common scams to be aware of:

- 1) Sweepstakes Scams: A person (or persons) will call and convince you that you have won between \$250,000 and \$7.5 million. They sometimes refer to the Publishers Clearinghouse contest. Callers are very convincing on the telephone. The callers will then request that you pay up front federal, state or customs fees prior to getting your award. Normally they will request you send the fees via Western Union, Cashiers Check or simply in cash.

A legitimate sweepstakes will never ask for any taxes or payments from the winner up front. Also, remember that you generally cannot win a sweepstakes that you have not entered!

- 2) Someone will send a check for part of your winnings for several thousand dollars and tell you to deposit the check into your bank account. Your bank will tell you the check is "okay." They then ask you to withdraw money out of your bank account and send it to them via Western Union for taxes. They will also ask you for your "PIN" number. Once you give them the PIN number, your money is gone and the check you deposited into your account is now "no good". The bank will charge you for the check. If you have withdrawn any of the money from the check you will be out that amount of money with your bank. The bank will not reimburse you.
- 3) You receive a call that your son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, or other close relative is in jail and they need money to bail them out. In this scam the scamster will call you and pretend to be a member of a law enforcement agency. A person will come on the line pretending to be your child or grandchild and will emotionally ask for your help. Prior to calling you, the scammers do their homework on getting information on your family members, normally from doing web searches on the internet. Your "incarcerated" family members can be in a jail anywhere, from Las Vegas to Mexico to Canada and elsewhere.

Criminal activity can be reported at www.cityofvacaville.com/departments/police, or you can call "Crime Stoppers" and leave an anonymous tip at 707-644-STOP.(7867). Crime Stoppers may pay up to \$1,000 for information that leads to an arrest.



Once you send the money, normally via Western Union, and give them a PIN number to retrieve your money, you will get a call back requesting more money. Your money is gone, and you will not be reimbursed the money you sent to them.

- 4) Females from inside and outside the country developing a "friendship" via the Internet. In this scam, women become friends with males via the Internet, developing a relationship with them. After the relationship is built the women will request money in order to come to the U.S. The money is sent, but the women never come to the U.S. Women can be victims of this crime as well. In a variation of this scam, after establishing the relationship online, the female sends you merchandise via the internet and asks you to pick it up at a local retailer. They then request that you mail the merchandise to countries in Africa as a favor to them. The merchandise is purchased using someone else's stolen credit card numbers. You unknowing are committing a crime.

Other scams to be aware of:

- 1) You are contacted and told by someone representing themselves as Microsoft that, for a fee, they can improve the performance of your Internet service at your home. The victim sends \$400 via the Internet, but there is no improvement because there is no service.
- 2) You are contacted by someone who says your debit card has been deactivated. In order to reactivate it, they need your credit card number for verification purposes. Fraud charges are now conducted using your credit card number. They may also ask you for your PIN number.

Some things to keep in mind: If something sounds too good to be true, it is probably a fraud. Hang up. Call the Vacaville Police Department.

If you don't recognize the phone number on Caller ID, let your answering machine take the call. If you are constantly being called, change your phone number.

And remember:

- Never provide any personal information over the telephone or Internet, regardless of how compelling and convincing the person may seem.
- To always verify prior to sending any money to anyone for any reason. The scamster will create a sense of urgency for you to react fast. Slow down, ask questions, and don't react without verifying everything.

If you have suspicions contact the Vacaville Police Department at (707) 449-5200 and report the incident immediately. Most persons do not report the incident due to either being embarrassed or still believing they are going to get their winnings. The winnings never come.

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