



HAND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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Press Statement

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Another wave of telephone calls is being reported from residents all in an effort to collect money.

In the current situation a caller, normally claiming to be a grandchild, calls to request help from the grandparent. The grandchild claims to have been injured in an accident and needs money to return home. The caller uses the injury to mask the change in the child's voice.

This scam closely resembles a scam used in the past where the grand child is hung up at the international boarder or in jail on charges and needs bond or fine money to be released from custody.

In most cases the caller offers what sounds like official or reliable information about a police or healthcare agency. In reality the agency listed has no connection to scam.

Frequently the callers know a significant amount of information about the family they are pretending to be from. Our office believes this information is harvested from internet or emails that ask questions about your family, associates or co-workers. Such quizzes are popular on "social network" sites used by, primarily, teenagers.

Recently the national news reported how these seemingly harmless quizzes provide considerable information about people. Information is then used by criminals who want to steal your money.

In almost all cases the request is made to send the money via Western Union. Western Union transfers are nearly impossible to trace so recovery is equally impossible.

The last calls we received have come from the Miami Florida telephone exchange. We have learned that services are available where a person can obtain a telephone number from almost anywhere while remaining in their home location. My office was able to obtain a unregistered telephone number in Aberdeen in only a matter of minutes and at no charge.

We suggest that anyone who receives a call for assistance do some investigative work before sharing any information or sending any money. The easiest method is to simply call the relative asking for help. In most cases the person of concern is where they are supposed to be and completely unaware of the issue. If that person is not available, check with a sibling or parent or someone with knowledge.

Another simple investigative tool is to search the telephone number via an internet search engine. The results typically show a history of scam reports and caution statements.

If you have been a victim of such a scam or have received calls of this nature please report them to your closest law enforcement agency.

Authority: Sheriff Doug DeBoer

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