



# Neighborhood Watch Newsletter



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Be Aware: Scams Targeting Our Community



### Scams

#### Be Aware: Scams Targeting Our Community

##### Scams, Scams and More Scams

Over the last several years we have seen a rise in scams targeting our community. While the scams have all varied in origin, many commonly require the victim to obtain a money pack, Green dot card, money gram or other type of payment method to avoid a penalty. If you or someone you know receives a call where you are instructed to make a payment and threatened with arrest, deportation or something similar, it is likely false. Almost all government agencies communicate by mail and DO NOT collect debt payments via the phone.

##### Types of Scams

##### Law Enforcement Department Scam

Law Enforcement advises the public to be aware of phone scams involving subjects pretending to be law enforcement personnel. Suspects fraudulently identify themselves as law enforcement officers and call victims claiming they have a warrant for their arrest. The reasons for the warrant vary; the most frequent being failing to appear for jury duty or unpaid tickets. The victims are then told they can resolve the issue by obtaining a pre-paid money card and calling back with the card number. Once the number is obtained, the funds can be accessed anywhere in the world. The scammers have used the names of actual Fremont Police Department personnel and "spoof" caller identification so the numbers of actual law enforcement agencies will appear on the victim's phone. The public is advised that the Fremont Police Department DOES NOT solicit by phone to advise of unpaid debts of any kind. In addition, payments related to warrants and/or citations are handled directly through the Court. The public can help combat this scam by doing the following:

- Do not call back and/or hang up if you are talking to them.
- Call the Fremont Police Department at 510-790-6800 to determine if an FPD employee is actually calling you and to file a report.
- Contact the Alameda County Court directly to inquire about outstanding bail or fine payment.

##### Lottery Scam

Victims have reported receiving letters saying that they have won a lottery prize. Usually there is a check included, supposedly to help you pay a "processing fee". Both the prize and the check are bogus. These letters usually come from outside the country, or out of state. It's more difficult to tell that it's a scam because the initial letter does not request bank account information. The Fremont Police Department advises you do not respond in any way. Legitimate lotteries or sweepstakes will never require a payment in order to win a prize. If you have not entered a lottery or sweepstakes, it's extremely unlikely you'll be a winner.

These letters are annoying, but are not illegal. Do not respond to them, either by mail or phone. Do not attempt to cash any unsolicited and unexpected check. Do not ever give callers or the senders of these letters any personal information (dates of birth, social security numbers, credit card, bank account information, etc.). If you have any questions about the legitimacy of anything you receive, please contact your local police department for advice and direction.

### **Grandfather Scam**

What's called "the grandparent scam," and its many variations, is going strong. In fact, recently an attempt was made on a Fremont resident. A "grandchild" or other relative calls, saying he has been in a terrible accident overseas and needs money immediately in order to receive medical attention. A "doctor" might get on the line to say your grandchild can't talk anymore because he or she needs medical attention. You must wire money for the treatment to proceed.

The script has different variations and can include:

- Your family member is arrested and need money to post bail.
- Your relative's car broke down and needs money to get it fixed.
- The relative is stuck at a foreign airport, has lost his/her passports and bank cards and needs money to return home.

The common theme is that the "grandchild" sounds like yours but can't talk for long or at all because there's an urgent situation that demands immediate funds. Often the fake grandchild will beg you not to tell his parents – anything to delay you from discovering the truth before parting with your money.

### **Rental Scams**

In the arbitrary Bay Area rental market, scams are very common and affect landlords and tenants alike. While contractual agreements between a landlord and tenant are considered a civil issue, it is criminal to provide fictitious names and or documents (social security cards, bank statements, pay stubs, etc.) in an effort to represent an affluent financial status. We have some great rental tips for landlords and tenants to consider if you are currently in or thinking about participating in the rental market.

### **Preying on Elderly Victims**

This scam typically goes something like this... An elderly adult victim receives a phone call or is approached near their bank by a suspect who states that he/she just won or inherited a very large sum of money. The suspect then asks for a short-term loan in exchange for part of their inheritance or to just be a good Samaritan. The elderly victim then provides cash and the suspect is never heard from again.

Phone and internet scams are common and often prey on elderly and vulnerable people. If you receive solicitations that are suspicious, do not provide any personal or banking information. It is suggested you try to obtain the caller's name, address, phone number and business name. If you think you are receiving scam solicitations or have been a victim of such scam, contact your local law enforcement agency.

### **How to protect yourself**

Be skeptical. These scams constantly evolve. By the time you read this, there will be new stories and new lies to persuade you to wire money. However, what you should do to protect yourself stays the same.

- Resist the pressure to act quickly.
- Try to contact the agency, company or family member to determine whether or not the call is legitimate.
- Never purchase money cards to pay a debt. Call the agency directly and obtain proof of the debt before making a payment. No official agencies will accept a money card.
- Never wire money based on a request made over the phone or in an e-mail...especially overseas. Wiring money is like giving cash—once you send it, you can't get it back.

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