

Community Crime Alert – IRS Telephone Scam



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Incident: Community Crime Alert – IRS Telephone Scam

Location: City of Ventura

Date of Release: October 29, 2014

Narrative:

Last month we issued a Community Crime Alert regarding the “IRS Telephone Scam”. We continue to receive a number of phone calls and reports from community members regarding the scam. We want to again advise the public to be aware of not only the scam but provide prevention measures, and what to do if you are a victim.

Typically the caller/scammers claim the individual owes taxes/back-taxes and immediate payment (typically via wire or pre-paid credit card) is required or the authorities will come over to arrest the individual for non-payment. Callers are frequently insulting or hostile and do so in an apparent attempt to scare their potential victim.

If you receive a call like this, hang up and do not provide any personal information to these individuals. The IRS will always send taxpayers a written notification of any taxes due via the U.S. mail. The IRS never asks for credit card, debit card or pre-paid card information over the telephone.

Additionally, many people rely on Caller ID these days however, the scammers may also be “spoofing” phone numbers to have the number appear as though the call is coming from Washington D.C. Spoofing is where the caller deliberately falsifies the telephone number and/or name relayed of the Caller ID information to disguise the identity of the calling party.

Scams of this nature, and similarly related scams (e.g., Lotto and Sweepstakes claims, check fraud, Mystery Shopper opportunities, “Grandparent” scam, etc.), ultimately work because they prey upon people’s vulnerabilities, ambitions, and emotions.

Unfortunately we hear all too often from victims of these scams who did not realize the scam until after they parted ways with their hard-earned dollars to these ruthless crooks.

Although there is some variation to each particular scam, the premise is fairly consistent; that is, in one way or another you are contacted/approached and told you owe money, or in the case of lotto/sweepstakes scams you may be told you have won a prize however, before claiming your prize you are asked to send money (again usually via wire or pre-paid credit card), provide personal data, or cash a fraudulent check. Whatever the set-up, the results are always the same for the victim; they end up losing hundreds or thousands of dollars in these scams, or sometimes even having their identity compromised.

The following link to the IRS’s website(www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/IRS-Reiterates-Warning-of-Pervasive-Telephone-Scam) provides information regarding the characteristics of the IRS scam, what to do if you receive a call from someone claiming to be from the IRS, prevention measures, and more.

If you are the victim of a crime please report it immediately to the Ventura Police Department at 1425 Dowell Dr., Ventura, CA, or call 805-339-4400.

Additionally, if you have incurred a loss of money or personally identifiable information, such as bank account number or Social Security Number, a representative from the Department of Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) will contact the victim to take a report after they’ve input the information via the following link on the TIGTA

website: www.treasury.gov/tigta/contact_report_scam.shtml