



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

San Diego Police Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WARNING REGARDING SCAM TARGETING THE ELDERLY

(San Diego) The San Diego Police Department is investigating a number of cases involving individuals who are scamming elderly people out of cash.

Description of the scam: The victim receives a call from someone claiming to be their grandson or a police officer. The grandson indicates that he is in Canada and is in trouble with the law and needs cash to be wired to a designated location. The suspect claiming to be a police officer says that the victim's relative is in trouble and needs cash to be wired to a designated location. The suspect then tells the victim to be discreet about his misfortune, in order to temporarily isolate the victim from other family members. The caller usually requests the money to be transferred via a company that provides electronic funds transfer and tells the victim that he will call back to get the transaction reference number. If the scammer gets his money, he calls back asking for more money. Later, when the victim contacts other family members to discuss the grandson the scam is revealed.

It is unknown how the suspects obtain the phone numbers of their victims or determine who to target. They may be using Internet search engines to dig up information on individuals.

SDPD has several cases involving a similar scam. The losses range from \$2,000 to \$85,000. Because these cases originate in Canada, victims are asked to notify SDPD and the Canadian Anti-Fraud Call Center at 888-495-8501 or www.phonebusters.com. You can also report fraud to the Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov. IC3 is a partnership between the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National White Collar Crime Center and the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Last month Montreal, Canada investigators conducted search warrants on mass marketing fraud rings and closed sixteen money transfer outlets. In one year there have been more than one thousand people (mostly elderly) victimized by these rings. The loss exceeded \$3.5 million.

The SDPD and IC3 recommend that anyone who has been a victim of fraud report it immediately. It is important for organizations combating these crimes to know the true number of occurrences and for legislators to understand the breadth of the problem so that they may enhance sentences for those prosecuted as appropriate.

If you have been a victim of this scam, please contact the SDPD for assistance at (619) 531-2000.

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