

From the Office of the Sheriff: Scams!!!! Is anybody listening?

Each and every day we receive a call or visit from an embarrassed scam victim. Embarrassed only because they fell for the promise of new found riches, a new Porsche, or a friendly voice portrayed as a police office calling for bond money for a grandson or granddaughter. We have spoken on this topic at great length – yet the numbers of victims continue to grow. Bottom lineup front – If it sounds too good to be true – it is too good to be true! These ruthless scammers create new scams each and everyday via unsolicited emails, letters, and phone calls..

The most popular of scams today include the million dollar lottery you won overseas and after you send the money for the overseas transfer fee for the winnings you will receive the proceeds. You never bought a lottery ticket, never traveled to the country, yet, you send the caller a few thousand bucks and scratch your head a week later when your million does not hit your bank account. Worse yet, the money you did have is gone as well.

What a soft spot we have for the poor young man in Nigeria who inherited \$100 million and he just needs you, the “sweet American” to help him get the money out of his country to the United States. He will pay you well for your troubles, just provide your bank account info, routing number and the deposits will roll in. After he steals everything you had you wonder how the guy got your email address in the first place. Don’t you think there are legitimate financial institutions that could help your new friend out? Why does he need you?

Selling something on Craig’s list? Let me guess, the first buyer said he will send a money order; it just happens to be three times the amount he owes you. Simple fix, deposit the money order, keep what you’re owed and send the remainder back via money order. Yup!! You did and 10 days later your bank tells you the buyers’ money order was a forgery. Tough lesson!

For the grand parents out there, I know you love them and will do anything for them. The phone call will come in the middle of the night, Johnnie is in jail, out of state, and he needs \$500.00 to get out and airfare to return home. Unfortunately Johnnie is unavailable to talk to you, just send the \$500 and a couple hundred for airfare via Western Union and the polite officer will ensure Johnnie gets to the airport. You spring out of bed, and quickly comply with the strict instructions. Johnnie has always been a good boy and you can’t bear the fact he is in jail. You send the money and call Johnnie the next day to see if he got home OK only to find out he never left town. Another expensive lesson!

Lastly, I would be remiss if we didn’t warn you about the fraudulent phone calls from people seeking your account numbers and routing numbers. Never provide such information to a stranger, much less over the telephone. Remember, no financial transaction is an emergency; it can always wait until the following day when you can confirm or verify the call with your bank.

Our elderly population is the target group for most scams. If you have elderly parents make sure they seek your advice or guidance. The number of victims will grow. The numbers we do not see are from those too embarrassed to report they were scammed. We need to hear from you. We may not get your money back but may be able to stop another from losing theirs. Thanks for listening, tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.