



Published June 12th, 2019

Scammers prey on Social Security fraud fears

By Vera Kochan

The latest scam to hit the unsuspecting public involves Social Security numbers.

Most often the scam comes in the form of an automated, direct to telephone voicemail message announcing that "your Social Security number has been suspected for fraudulent activity. Call this number (scammers conveniently provide one) before we proceed with legal proceedings against you. Thank you and goodbye."

The reason this reporter is able to quote the scammers verbatim is because she has received this voicemail six times in the space of two weeks, sometimes twice a day.

Moraga Police Department Det. Kevin Mooney stated, "People fall for this because we're basically honest and believe others are too. That's why they're called 'confidence scams.' Most people are law abiding and want to make things right."

The victims are usually not specifically targeted, although attempts are made to take advantage of the elderly, especially those suffering from memory loss issues. Scammers sit in a large room making cold calls from overseas. The Social Security scam is operating out of India.

While the elderly are most likely to fall prey to scams, teens and young adults are the next level of victims, with the threat of legal reprisals making them gullible targets. Mooney said, "We've had five to six people come to us just this year, crying because they've given thousands of dollars to these people. Never, ever, ever transfer any money to someone you don't know. Don't give Social Security or credit card numbers away, and always verify everything."

The IRS scam operates much the same way as the Social Security scam. Victims are told that they owe money, and if they don't pay the police will be knocking on their door.

And, as old as it may be, the call to grandma for bail money, because junior got himself into trouble with the law, is still a scam in circulation. This one opts to tug on a loved one's heartstrings.

"Lottery scams are popular, because people don't often remember if they've filled out a form in which merchandise is the supposed prize," Mooney said. "Scammers say for a small processing fee you'll get your prize. No legitimate organization will ask you for money to collect a prize.

"If you receive a scam phone call, don't press any of the buttons or prompts on your phone," Mooney explained. "There are sophisticated systems out there that can track information on you the minute you start to respond to the prompts."

Before responding to any suspicious scams or phone calls, Mooney stressed, "Don't panic. Call a friend or family member for advice before proceeding." When possible, always take down the caller's phone number and report it to the police.

Reach the reporter at: vera@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA