

The West Dundee Police Department reminds residents to be aware of the so-called “Grandparent Scam,” in which a person calls and pretends to be a grandchild who needs money for bail, medical treatment or other emergency.

The scam typically begins with a distressed phone call from someone posing as a grandchild who says he or she is in trouble. In some cases, the caller hands the phone to someone else who says he is an attorney or health care professional trying to help the “family member,” but needs to have money transferred over immediately to cover legal, medical or other costs.

These scams prey on the emotional attachment victims have for their family, and their willingness to do anything they can to help a loved one in distress, but people need to remember that wiring money is the same as sending cash, and consumers have very little protections if they wire money to an individual. Typically you cannot reverse the transaction once it is made, nor can you easily trace the money or recover it from a con artist.

To avoid being scammed, the Police Department recommends that residents take the following precautions:

- Remain calm and don’t act out of a sense of urgency.
- Request contact information from the caller, including a name and a way to call him or her back.
- Call the typically known and trusted number for the loved one who is supposedly in trouble to see if he or she answers; call other family members to find out where he or she is.
- Never give personal information, bank routing numbers or credit card numbers to someone calling you over the phone or reaching out to you via email.
- Be skeptical of anyone who calls and asks you to either wire transfer money or use a pre-paid debit card, regardless of whether it is for a supposed overdue bill or family emergency.
- Do not wire money unless you have verified with a third party that the child really is in trouble. Call the hospital or jail using a number you located yourself to verify your loved one’s status.
- Never post on any social media site when you or your loved ones will be on vacation, and always be suspicious if a grandchild calls from a far location and doesn’t identify themselves by name or uses the wrong name for you.

Scammers sometimes randomly dial people until they reach a senior citizen and then let the senior “fill in the blanks” by voluntarily saying the grandchild’s name.

It is unfortunate that we live in a time when scammers will stop at nothing to try to take advantage of others, but police suggest that residents can protect themselves by being savvy to the tricks they use to steal your identity or otherwise perpetrate a crime of deception against an unwitting victim.

General inquiries may be directed to West Dundee police officer John Scheffler who specializes as an Illinois Senior Services liaison officer. Officer Scheffler can be reached at 847-551-3810 or jscheffler@wdundee.org

Consumers also should file a complaint with their local police department and report the scam to the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov (<http://www.ftc.gov/>) or by calling toll-free 1-877-FTC-HELP.