



MEDIA RELEASE

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Telephone, Email, Social Media Fraud/Theft Schemes

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is continuing to receive calls from citizens who are victims of fraud/theft scheme. The theft/fraud schemes take many forms.

Kidnapping Scheme – The victim received a telephone call from someone asking vague, personal questions regarding their family members. The man claims their family member was involved in a motor vehicle accident with his relative. The man tells the victim he is holding their relative captive until a family member goes to a local money wiring service and wires money to him in the amount of the vehicle damages caused by their relative. The "damage" is usually several hundred to several thousands of dollars. Thus far, all calls have come from a 301 exchange.

Bail Money Scheme – The victim received a telephone call from someone claiming to be a friend of their relative. The caller states the relative is incarcerated and needs of bail money. The victim is instructed to go to a money-wiring service and wire bail money so he/she can bail out their relative.

Advance Fee Scheme – The victim receives a phone calls or email regarding "winning or inheriting" a large amount of money. The victim must advance money or send a "processing fee" via a money transfer/wiring service; or the victim is instructed to deposit the processing fee into the caller's/emailer's bank account. In return the victim will receive a larger amount of money. The victim sends the money and never receives anything in return.

Overpayment of Merchandise Sold On-line Scheme – The victim sold merchandise on-line. The "buyer" sent a check for more than the price of the item. The buyer tells the victim to cash the check and return the difference. The check is fraudulent and the victim loses the money when the check bounces and the merchandize sold.

Anytime an individual sends money to someone he/she does not know personally or gives personal or financial information to unknown callers, email requests, check over payments, etc; that individual increase his/her chances of becoming a victim. If you are suspicious something may be "too good to be true" or you are contacted by someone you do not know requesting money, do not send money, report the contact to law enforcement. The Federal Bureau of Investigation maintains a very helpful website regarding common fraud schemes at <http://www.fbi.gov/scams-safety/fraud>