



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

February 11, 2013

### **Telephone "Kidnapping" Extortion Scam**

On February 11, 2013 local law enforcement received six calls from concern citizens who had received telephone calls from a man 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 Western Union or some other 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.

This kidnapping extortion scam is very similar to extortions scam which occurred recently in Miami, Florida, Middlesex County, New Jersey and Martinsburg, West Virginia in late 2012 and early 2013. See below links:

<http://miami.cbslocal.com/2012/08/15/a-warning-about-fake-kidnapping-scams/>

[http://www.nj.com/middlesex/index.ssf/2012/12/police\\_in\\_middlesex\\_county\\_war.html](http://www.nj.com/middlesex/index.ssf/2012/12/police_in_middlesex_county_war.html)

<http://www.journal-news.net/page/content.detail/id/589906/Officials-warn-against-rash-of-extortion-scams-by-phone--email.html?nav=5006>

These calls are very alarming. Should you receive a similar phone call claiming a family member is being held captive, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office recommends:

Use cautions and DO NOT divulge any personal information regarding yourself or any of your family members;

Ask probing questions of the caller and gather as much information about the caller as you can;

Have the caller describe your family member, the vehicle you family member was allegedly operating, and where/when the accident occurred, etc;

Attempt to contact and/or account for relatives;

DO NOT wire any money and contact the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office or your law enforcement immediately.