



**St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office**  
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# NEWS RELEASE

## St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Warns of Email-Based Payment Scam

**LEONARDTOWN, MD** (April 6, 2026) - The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is warning residents and businesses about an ongoing financial crime trend involving fraudulent emails that mimic legitimate business transactions.

In reported cases, victims are engaged in legitimate business dealings with a company and communicate via email. During those exchanges, an unknown individual sends a fraudulent email that appears to be from the legitimate business. The email typically includes instructions to pay an expected invoice, often directing the victim to send funds via wire transfer.

Believing the request to be legitimate, victims send payments to what they think is the business, but the funds are sent to an unknown third party. The fraud is often not discovered until several days later, when the victim or the business follows up on the payment status.

To help prevent this type of fraud, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office encourages the public to take the following steps:

- **Slow down and review payment emails carefully.** Look closely at the sender's email address, as fraudulent messages may appear legitimate but often differ by a single character.
- **Verify payment instructions before sending funds.** Always confirm requests through a separate, trusted method, such as calling the business using a known phone number.
- **Pause when messages create urgency.** Be cautious of emails that pressure you to act immediately. Take time to evaluate the request before responding.
- **Check sender details closely.** Ensure the "from" and "reply-to" email addresses match and are consistent with the legitimate business.
- **Inspect links before clicking.** Hover over links to confirm they lead to the correct and legitimate website before opening them.

Anyone who believes they have been a victim of this scam should immediately contact their bank to attempt to stop the transaction. Victims are also encouraged to report the incident to the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office so the matter can be investigated.

For emergencies, call 911. For non-emergency assistance, contact the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office at 301-475-8008.

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