



EFFINGHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SPECIAL NEWS RELEASE

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SOPHISTICATED SCAMMERS

An influx of telemarketer scammers have been flooding the area in recent weeks, using and falsifying local government agency and business names and numbers, including the Effingham Police Department, to solicit funds. Although phone and email scams aren't new, technology is progressing at a pace that enables the scammers to appear even more believable and legitimate. In short, scammers are becoming sophisticated.

The latest effort to obtain money by deceitful means comes in two distinct forms. The first utilizes phone calls which display a local government agency number and name such as Effingham Police Department, lending credibility that the caller is legitimate. The second form uses realistic spoof email addresses that are very similar to legitimate email addresses and websites for companies and government agencies. Both scam forms have an ultimate end goal: to fraudulently obtain money or personal information from you, their unsuspecting victim.

Chief Jeffrey Fuesting reminds Effingham residents that "The Effingham Police Department never calls or emails to request money for donations, nor do we call and threaten any person with arrest unless a payment is made immediately over the phone. If you receive a call like that, just hang up."

Although scammers may be getting more sophisticated, Effingham citizens can stay a step ahead by practicing some simple safety tips:

Spot imposters. Scammers often pretend to be someone you trust, like a government official, a family member, a charity, or a company you do business with. Don't send money or give out personal information in response to an unexpected request — whether it comes as a text, a phone call, or an email.

Do online searches. Type a company or product name into your favorite search engine with words like "review," "complaint" or "scam." Or search for a phrase that describes your situation, like "IRS call." You can even search for phone numbers to see if other people have reported them as scams.



Don't believe your caller ID. Technology makes it easy for scammers to fake caller ID information, so the name and number you see aren't always real. If someone calls asking for money or personal information, hang up. If you think the caller might be telling the truth, call back to a number you know is genuine.

Don't pay up front for a promise. Someone might ask you to pay in advance for things like debt relief, credit and loan offers, mortgage assistance, or a job. They might even say you've won a prize but first you have to pay taxes or fees. If you do, they will probably take the money and disappear.

Consider how you pay. Credit cards have significant fraud protection built in, but some payment methods don't. Wiring money through services like Western Union or MoneyGram is risky because it's nearly impossible to get your money back. That's also true for reloadable cards like Reloadit, Red Dot or Vanilla. Government offices and honest companies won't require you to use these payment methods.

Talk to someone. Before you give any money or personal information, talk to someone you trust. Con artists want you to make decisions in a hurry. They might even threaten you. Slow down, check out the story, do an online search, consult an expert — or just tell a friend.

Hang up on robocalls. If you answer the phone and hear a recorded sales pitch, hang up and report it to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). These calls are illegal, and often the products are bogus. Don't press 1 to speak to a person or to be taken off the list. That could lead to more calls.

Don't deposit a check and wire money back. By law, banks must make funds from deposited checks available within days, but uncovering a fake check can take weeks. If a check you deposit turns out to be a fake, you're responsible for repaying the bank.

For additional resources, including ways to prevent or report scams, please visit the following websites:

- Get additional tips and sign up for free scam alerts delivered right to your inbox from the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov/scams
- If you have been the victim of Identity Theft, call the Office of the Illinois Attorney General at 1-866-999-5630 or online at www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/consumers/hotline.html
- Prevent unwanted telemarketer calls by signing up for the National Do Not Call Registry at 1-888-382-1222 or registering online at www.donotcall.gov
- If you have been the victim of a fraudulent on-line auction transaction, file a complaint with the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) www.ic3.gov/complaint/splash.aspx
- Contact one of the three Credit Bureau Reporting Agencies yearly to request a copy of your credit report:
 - Trans Union 1-800-680-7289
 - Experian 1-888-397-3742
 - Equifax 1-800-525-6285