

Sheriff's Office sees surge in phone scams impersonating Sheriff's Deputies

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office is receiving numerous reports today about a phone scam in which the scammers pose as Sheriff's Office personnel to fraudulently obtain money from innocent victims.

These reports are particularly concerning because it appears as if the scammers are using names of Sheriff's Office personnel and are able to manipulate the phone technology so that the recipient's caller ID shows an actual Sheriff's Office phone number.

The scammer tells the person there is a warrant out for their arrest for a certain amount of fine. The reason for the warrant is represented as being anything from a traffic violation to failure to pay full income tax requirements to the Internal Revenue Service.

The scammer then tells the potential victim that their options are either to surrender themselves to the Sheriff's Office for arrest, or that they may pay a "reduced" payment of the fine to adjudicate the warrant.

The scammer provides instruction on how the payment should be submitted, usually through an "eGift" cash card or similar payment to a specified account or name given by the caller.

These scam artists use pre-paid phones and many times are not even in the jurisdiction where the crime occurred, making their apprehension difficult.

Although the Washoe County Sheriff's Office will sometimes make calls to inform someone about a warrant, the Office will not ask for payment over the phone or negotiate for payment in lieu of arrest.

Anyone with questions about a warrant may call the courts and local law enforcement agencies. No agency in the region offers reduced rates or takes payments over the phone for warrants and fines.

Anyone who has suffered a loss as a result of this scam is encouraged to take down as much information as possible, such as a name and call back number, without giving any information away. Then, immediately contact the Washoe County Sheriff's Office at (775) 328-3001.