



Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office

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News Release

Warning Regarding Recent Phone Scams and Fraud Schemes

Santa Barbara - The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office is warning residents to be wary of a number of telephone scams and door-to-door fraud schemes that have been reported in the area. Many of the attempted crimes start out with a person calling on the telephone and claiming to be government employees or law enforcement officers. Other schemes involve a person coming to the door of residences with fake legal papers or arrest warrants and demanding money to prevent an arrest or other threats. People should be warned that government officers rarely make initial contact by telephone and never demand a person give them credit or debit card information over the telephone or at the door.

Persons coming to your door with legal papers should always give you the legal papers, rather than flashing them quickly and taking them back. Always ask for identification from someone coming to your door claiming to be a law enforcement officer and take the time to read the identification. If the person quickly shows the identification and puts it away, ask them to show it to you again so you can read it. A person showing a badge should also have an ID card to match it. A real law enforcement officer will not object to a person asking for proper identification.

Telephone calls from persons claiming to be government officials are a frequent way for fraud schemes to start. Other schemes have callers claiming to be from "Windows Technical Support" or other official-sounding commercial offices. Be wary of people calling your telephone to tell you about a problem and then demanding that you provide identifying information "to make sure we have the right person." If a government office or legitimate business is calling your telephone number to report a legal problem or problem with your existing account or service, they should already know who you are and should not need you to provide your name, address or financial information. It is a good idea if you get such a call to ask for their telephone number and offer to call them back. A fraudulent caller will usually refuse to do this and make threats about what will happen if you do not comply with their requests during that telephone call.

Some important things to know about such scams and fraud schemes:

- A real law enforcement officer will never demand cash or credit card information when contacting you on the street or at your home.
- Federal officers such as IRS, Immigration and the Treasury Department rarely make initial contact with a person over the telephone.
- If someone comes to your door and demands that you identify yourself, ask them for their identification first. Demand identification, licenses and references from anyone coming to your door offering services, such as home improvement projects.
- Never give credit or debit card information to people you do not know coming to your door.
- Always question and challenge callers who ask you for information about yourself in telephone calls. Ask them for their name, company or agency and ask them for a call back number.
- If an offer is too good to be true, it probably is. Very few matters require your immediate action.

The Sheriff's Office does not want to see any of our citizens fall victim to a scam and request that you report all fraudulent phone calls and door-to-door contacts.