

If something is too good to be true...

Written by Chris Lee

... IT PROBABLY IS!!!

Real looking checks or money orders, phone calls from fake grandchildren and emails promising money. These are all ways scammers are trying to dupe people out of their hard earned cash.

Holyoke Police Department said they have seen an increase in scams and fraud over the last few months. Many of the attempts have been aimed towards the elderly population and some have fallen victim.

HPD wants people to be aware that if there is any question to something, don't act on it and check it out first. Especially the elderly, who fall victim to scams easier than others.

Another rule to follow is, "If you didn't initiate it, it probably isn't real."

The checks that come through the mail look fairly similar to a bank check or money order. The instructions tell the recipient to deposit the check but then send a sum of money back to the sender. When all is said and done, the check doesn't clear and the person is out however much they sent back.

"People need to be aware of those," police chief Doug Bergstrom said.

Another form of scam has come in the form of a caller trying to identify themselves as the recipients' grandchild. They cleverly work the real name of a grandchild out of the person they called and then start to give instructions on how to send money because they are in trouble.

A main story has been they are in jail and need bailed out. Another one includes a lost passport. Bergstrom urges people to take down the phone number, hang up and try reaching their grandchild or other family members to find out the "real" location of their grandchild who supposedly called.

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HPD said most of the calls seem to be coming from Jamaica and Nigeria.

Once a caller is successful and actually gets some money, they try out the area to see if they can get someone else to fall victim.

Bergstrom said in a more recent case, a caller was able to get money and since has been calling back with death threats trying to get more.

HPD said it's really tough for law enforcement to do anything to try and get money back if someone is duped out of it.

Anyone with questions or concerns can call HPD at 854-2244.

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