

Phone, check scams target grandmas

Written by Chris Lee

Scams seem to be popping up everywhere. Internet, telephone and even scams through the mail are becoming more and more visible in today's tough economic times.

Lela Carruthers recently received a phone call from someone posing as her grandchild. "Is this Kevin?" she asked. When asking what grandson was in trouble, she provided a name and thought it was a legitimate call.

"He sounded different," Carruthers said. She said it had been awhile since she had spoken with her grandson on the phone and didn't think anything about it. He said he might have sounded funny because he had been hit in the mouth and nose.

The caller asked Carruthers to keep the call between themselves and asked for money because he was in trouble. When saying she didn't have the funds, the caller kept coming up with other ways she could get the money. "Could you borrow it from the bank?" the caller asked her.

Fortunately, Carruthers found out it was a scam and hung up.

"Hi grandma, I'm in trouble," was what another elderly person in Holyoke heard on the other end of their phone recently.

According to the person's grandson, who wasn't in trouble and not the one on the phone, his grandparent was ready to send the money, until he stopped it.

The woman asked the person on the other end of the line which grandson she was speaking with by listing names of her grandchildren. This provided the scammer with names to choose from just as Carruthers did. Fortunately, the process was halted before a money transfer could be completed.

It is recommended to call and verify different situations with other family members.

Phone, check scams target grandmas

Written by Chris Lee

Carruthers said she has heard of at least four other people in Holyoke who have received similar calls and said everyone should be careful not to fall for the fraudulent calls.

Another call consisted of the caller saying the granddaughter of the person receiving the call was in jail and needed money. This scam was sought out immediately because the granddaughter in question is 2 years old.

Fake checks received in the mail

Holyoke Police Chief Phil Biersdorfer said another scam has been seen recently in the form of checks coming through the mail.

Fake checks have been mailed out to area residents recently. These checks are completely fake and in some instances require the person receiving it to send a portion of the money back to the sender. Residents are warned not to follow through with returning any money.

The checks have come in the form of fake businesses, secret shopper and lottery-type winning checks.

Carruthers wasn't only the target of a phone scam but also check scams. In a period of four days she received two different checks totaling \$7,450. The downside, they weren't real. Not even close. But to the naked eye, they look like real checks.

The letters accompanying each check explained she had won prize money. If both were real, Carruthers would've been \$185,000 richer. One of the checks she received was for \$3,950.

Phone, check scams target grandmas

Written by Chris Lee

The letter stated “to expedite the processing, enclosed is a check of \$3,950 which has been deducted from your winnings. You will be using some money on this first check to pay for the applicable taxes on your total winning (\$65,000).”

It instructs in the letter, “Do not attempt to use this check until you call and speak with the claim agent.” Phone numbers, name of agent and office hours are all listed. One of the letters lists a number in British Columbia, Canada while the other is a 416 area code for Toronto and Ontario.

Another check (the first one she received) was from State Farm Fire and Casualty Company in Monroe, La. She instantly called her nephew who works for State Farm and he said they don't have offices in Monroe. This tipped off Carruthers to the scam.

Monday when she received the second check, she noticed the envelopes were very similar. All the coding was the same and each stamp was the same—Canadian stamps.

Phillips County Senior Service Coordinator and Ombudsman Erin LeBlanc said she tries to mention scams to senior citizens as often as she can. Specific examples include callers posing as bank personnel or Medicare representatives.

LeBlanc urges people to hang up and call a number they have on file to verify it is legitimate if they didn't initiate the phone call. She said don't ever call a number the caller supplies.

If something seems too good to be true, out of the ordinary or just weird, step back and think about it or contact local law enforcement.