



Crime Prevention Newsletter

Trent Woods Police Department

Community Watch Initiative

www.trentwoodspd.org

police@trentwoodsnc.org

Chief

Tony W. Lee

Office:

(252) 637-3030

Trent Woods Town Hall

(252) 637-9810

(252) 637-7088 (fax)

Emergency

911

FREE GUN LOCKS

are still available

SAR

Suspicious Activity Reporting

"CYMBALS"

Color-What color is the vehicle?

Year- Do you know the year?

Make- Chevrolet, Ford, Hyundai, etc.

Body- Truck, car, SUV, big, little, hybrid

Additional features- Stickers in the windows, loud mufflers, etc.

License plate #- Write it down so you don't forget it.

State- Where is it from? The state is always on the license plate.

Fraud

Part 1

In Part One of our Fraud series, we will examine fraud targeting senior or disabled adults, including common scams, and what we can do to help others protect themselves against victimization.

Exploitation of the seniors, elderly, or disabled is not a new phenomena, and it is a difficult problem to address. The victims in these types of cases often have no way of effectively communicating what has happened to them, have no idea they have been victimized, or are so embarrassed and ashamed of their victimization that they never report the crime. It is our hope this information can not only help our community identify potential sources of fraudulent activity targeting their loved ones, but also empower our older citizens to speak-up and report criminal activity.

Scams

Some of the most common scams used to target seniors, elderly, and disabled adults are carried out over the telephone and internet, and either prey on one's desire for wealth or financial stability, or prey on one's emotions. The following are examples of common telephone and internet scams:

- Lottery/Sweepstakes Scams

Lottery and Sweepstakes scams usually begin via telephone or email, exclaiming one has won a large amount of money (or something else of value, like a car). The caller, who often has a foreign accent, explains in order to claim the winnings, one must pay a small "fee" to have the prize released, which the caller may refer to as a tax, or shipping and handling charge. Excited because of one's good fortune, one quickly follows their instructions in sending the "fee" (we will discuss methods of sending money later) only to find out there has been some sort of hitch in the transaction, and additional "fees" will be necessary to release the winnings. This will most likely happen several times, until the small "fee" quickly becomes thousands of dollars.

Senior and elder adults often live on a fixed income, and the idea of a better quality of life through additional income, as well as having money to pass on to their families is, I think we can all agree, a temptation that is hard to ignore. But as the old saying goes, if it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

- "Grandparent Scam"

The "Grandparent Scam" preys on emotions, and exploits a grandparent's instinct to help their family. For example, one receives a telephone call from a strange number, from a "grandson" claiming to have been arrested while out of the state on spring break. They explain they have already met with a judge, who will release them from jail and drop all charges if they pay a fine. The "grandson" goes on to say he does not have enough money to pay the fine, and cannot call his parents for fear of punishment and shame. Because one does not want to leave their "grandson" in jail, one arranges for money to be paid for his release.

(Continued on next page)



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- “Grandparent Scam” (*continued*)

In this case, victimization can be avoided by a simple telephone call to the grandson's parents, or even to the grandson's telephone number. Another old saying, trust but verify, seems to apply.

- Home Repair Scams

Not all scams are perpetrated over the phone, some are carried out face-to-face. Home repair or maintenance scams are also common occurrences, and though anyone can be targeted, our older citizens seem to be targeted more frequently. In these types of scams, one will hear a knock on the door, to find a charismatic handy-man willing to offer his services. He explains he noticed damage to the roof as he rode by, and felt it was his responsibility to bring it to one's attention. He goes on to say he would be more than willing to make the necessary repairs, and might even offer a discount.

Because one is unable to inspect the damage for oneself, and unable to climb a ladder to inspect the repairs, one will not know there was no damage to begin with, and the repairs completed by the handy-man are non-existent.

What can we do?

Unfortunately, there is not much we can do to stop the attempts of would be criminals, but we certainly can stop them from achieving their goals. There are all manner of telemarketing and public record companies, who buy and sell small bits of personal information daily. These small bits may consist of telephone numbers, email addresses, home addresses, and the names of family members. In one way or another, criminals are able to obtain this information, and will begin to make their calls to unsuspecting victims. Though it is possible, in theory, to stop the calls all together, it would be difficult, and is a discussion for another time. In this case, it is more prudent to concentrate on what to do when the scammers call, either on the phone, or at our door:

- Never, under any circumstance, provide any personal information over the telephone, email, or to strangers at your door. If one has questions regarding the reputability or legitimacy of an unknown caller, ask a loved one or friend for assistance, or contact the Trent Woods Police Department.
- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Criminals hate questions, and will not want to prove themselves to you. Anyone legitimate will be more than happy to provide you with credentials, contact information, and references. Again, when in doubt, call a friend or loved one, or call TWPD.
- Trent Woods has a no solicitation ordinance, which prohibits door-to-door sales tactics, and would be handy-men knocking on one's door. If this happens, contact TWPD immediately, and provide as much information as possible, to help us identify and stop those responsible.
- Take an active part in the lives of our older family members and friends, to make them aware of the dangers and safeguard them against it, and report fraudulent activity to the Trent Woods Police Department as soon as possible.