

CONTACT:

Walt Stowe

PIO/Community Relations Deputy

Garfield County Sheriff's Office

106 County Road 333-A

Rifle, CO 81650

Phone: 970-665-0207

Email: wstowe@garcosheriff.com



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Sheriff Lou Vallario
Garfield County, Colorado

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: October 9, 2018

Time: 1:25 PM

Title: The IRS Phone Scam, Amongst Others, is Back

IMPORTANT: Please direct any media requests to the contact above. Do not contact the Garfield County Emergency Communications Center or Patrol staff for media requests.

GARFIELD COUNTY, CO. –

Phone Scams continue to invade our privacy and compromise our way of life in Garfield County. In February of 2016 the Garfield County Sheriff's Office sent out a very comprehensive news release describing how some of these scams work and how you might fall victim. Now two and one half years later with the resurgence of phone scams, currently the IRS scam, it seems prudent to revisit the topic.

They come in all flavors and in all seasons and you need to be aware of them. They use auto dialers which sequentially go through a series of phone numbers with an area prefix. Even if you have an unlisted number or a private cell phone they will eventually hit your number. Once you answer the game is on. If they have your name via a caller id or some other means they immediately begin to address you personally.

Some of the most recent scams include:

- 1) The caller indicates that they are an IRS agent, they may even provide a name and badge number (most likely fictitious) as well as a phone number. If you call the phone number you will be answered by someone claiming to be a part of the IRS Criminal Investigations. This all seems plausible until they start asking you to make a payment over the phone or by acquiring a money card from any one of several local vendors and then transferring funds to them via the card numbers.
- 2) The caller poses as a Deputy or another law enforcement officer and indicates that a warrant will be issued for your arrest for failure to appear for jury duty, pay a traffic fine, parking ticket etc. He then asks for immediate payment to avoid the arrest warrant being issued.
- 3) The caller poses as a representative of your credit card company and tells you that a recent payment was missed. You may wonder; how will he know which card I have? You need to understand and consider how many millions of people have a credit card from Citibank, Chase or Wells Fargo just to name a few. With a simple question or two he can quickly identify which

card you might have and once again the game is on, he will try to separate you from your hard earned dollars.

So what can you do if you suspect a possible fraud or scam?

- 1) If you receive a call from someone you don't know claiming to be with the government, law enforcement, the IRS, Courts, immigration, your credit card company etc. get a return number from them and a name if you can, then don't call that number. Instead go to the FBI website at www.IC3.gov to file a complaint or call your local law enforcement agency to see what they recommend. Remember time is on your side. Don't be pressured into making a quick decision.

You also need to understand the following things:

- 1) Our court systems are not set up to call everyone to tell them that they will be issuing an arrest warrant. If you have an obligation with the courts that could turn into an arrest warrant you need to satisfy that obligation.
- 2) Law Enforcement will not call you to tell you someone is coming to arrest you, they will simply show up at your location and make the arrest.
- 3) Typically when you call a government office, especially the IRS, you will have between fifteen minutes and an hour of wait time. You will probably find yourself listening to elevator music with intermittent apologies for the wait. Finally you may actually be able to speak to a person. If you get through right away, beware! It is probably not a legitimate contact; don't just think you were lucky. Better yet, refer back to number one in the previous breakout....don't call that number!
- 4) Never use your credit card, bank account number or untraceable money cards to make a payment. Ask for a written statement to be sent to you so that you can make arrangements to pay the bill. Time is on your side and most creditors, especially our government will work with you if you are sincere about settling your account.
- 5) Avoid anyone who is trying to get immediate payment. If it turns out you truly do owe the money, one or two days won't matter and in the interim you can do some research. Go through your local law enforcement agencies or the FBI to determine if this was a legitimate request.
- 6) Remember the con artist tries to develop a sense of urgency. It is to his advantage if he can make you pay immediately, he may even offer to take a discount if you can make a payment right now. This should be a red flag for you.

Finally know that these scams are most prevalent on the phone, but they can appear on an e-mail or social media. (How many places have you left your e-mail address in the last year?) The approach can be direct, in person, at your home, over a lunch hour and the lists go on. The con artist or scammer has nothing better to do than think up a new angle. He knows the success of that approach might be intermittent or short lived but then again how many times does he need to succeed to walk away with your money or the money of your friends?

Additional information will be released as it becomes available.

The mission of the Garfield County Sheriff's Office is to provide solutions for the people through professional, ethical and compassionate conduct.

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