



CHIEF G. JOSEPH WISE

IMPORTANT NUMBERS:

Emergency
911

Non-Emergency
(614) 277-1710

Crime Prevention
(614) 277-1765

Anonymous Tip Line
(614) 277-1808

Investigative Bureau
(614) 277-1750



MAYOR RICHARD L. STAGE

The Grove City Division of Police

CRIME ALERT

RE: GRANDPARENT / RELATIVE SCAM
DATE: April 29, 2009

The Grandparent/Relative Scam seems to be gaining popularity. This scam has been around for a while but lately seems to be gaining momentum. This scam preys on the elderly who want to help a family member. If the victim falls for this scam they typically lose several thousand dollars. It usually works because of the victim is caught off guard and they want to help a family member.

In 2007 the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, also known as PhoneBusters, received 128 complaints about this scam. Through Sept. 2008 they received over 317 complaints.

It is unclear how the scammers obtain their information. The calls could be totally random. A scammer could call and just say "Hi Grandma (or Grandpa)" when the phone is answered and wait for the victim to respond with a name. Another theory is that the amount of personal information people are putting on sites such as Facebook and MySpace make them susceptible to being a victim.

The typical scenario for this fraud is a grandparent receives a phone call from a con-artist claiming to be one of his or her grandchildren. The caller says he (or she) is in some kind of trouble – usually involving a car accident, trying to return from a foreign country, or needing funds to pay bail – and needs money immediately. The caller specifically asks the victim to not contact other relatives because the caller doesn't want to "get in trouble" with other family members. Wanting to help their grandchild, the victim sends money electronically, usually through a form of money transfer.

Variations on the scam exist where the con-artist claims to be an old neighbor or friend of the family, etc. It is suggested that family members establish a password between themselves as a protective measure against these types of crime. Because the suspects are in another country, it is very hard to track them down, let alone prosecute them. The best way to fight this scam is through education.

If an attempt was made to con you, please contact the Grove City Division of Police immediately at 277-1710. Anonymous tips may be left at 277-1808.