NEWS RELEASE
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Beware the Scare-Tactic Scammers

Eugene Police are continuing to hear of scams in which the perpetrators are impersonating officers, IRS agents, and financial institutions. It is easy to get taken in, even if you are usually suspicious of scams. These scams try to alarm you or scare you.

On September 8, Police took a report from a woman who received a call from a man claiming to be with the IRS. He said she owed the IRS money in back taxes and that a warrant would be issued. She then received a subsequent call from a man saying he was with Eugene Police Department and she needed to do what she was told regarding the ‘owed’ money. She received a third call from a man claiming to be with the US Treasury’s Department of Legal Affairs advising her to obtain legal counsel. She called back one of the numbers for the ‘IRS’ and was told she had to send a money order immediately and if she disconnected the phone a warrant would be issued. A second call came in that showed the caller’s ID as ‘911.’ This caller said he was with Eugene Police and she must do what the person on the other line told her to do or be arrested. She was alarmed and called her bank while keeping the “IRS” impersonator on the line. Calling her bank directly and not using any numbers provided to her by the scammers was a great move. The teller advised her to call Eugene Police directly which she did, finding the whole thing had been a nasty scam. EPD’s Financial Crimes Unit is continuing to investigate.

The whole idea of this scam was to cause alarm. The IRS would never call someone and demand payment immediately via money order and a Eugene Police Officer would never call someone to tell someone to do what the IRS is telling them and thirdly, the IRS would never require that you stay on the line until the banking transaction is complete.

Here’s what the IRS says on their website:

“IR-2014-53, April 14, 2014
WASHINGTON — As the 2014 filing season nears an end, the Internal Revenue Service today issued another strong warning for consumers to guard against sophisticated and aggressive phone scams targeting taxpayers, including recent immigrants, as reported incidents of this crime continue to rise nationwide. These scams won’t likely end with the filing season so the IRS urges everyone to remain on guard.
The IRS will always send taxpayers a written notification of any tax due via the U.S. mail. The IRS never asks for credit card, debit card or prepaid card information over the telephone. For more information or to report a scam, go to www.irs.gov and type "scam" in the search box.

People have reported a particularly aggressive phone scam in the last several months. Immigrants are frequently targeted. Potential victims are threatened with deportation, arrest, having their utilities shut off, or having their driver's licenses revoked. Callers are frequently insulting or hostile - apparently to scare their potential victims."

More illustrations from EPD:
On Monday, local woman received a letter from "financial reporting services" saying she was approved to receive a check if she signed a confirmation form and sent in $20. She did this and two weeks later received another letter saying the same thing. She went to her bank and found it was a scam.

In May, 2014, Eugene Police sent out advisories about a utility bill scam, because a scammer was calling local utility customers, telling them a truck was en route to shutting off the power due to unpaid bills and then trying to get the customer to pay them directly within 30 minutes while threatening to shut off the power if they didn't.

In April 2014, Eugene Police sent out a news release because its Financial Crimes Unit had seen a flurry of local activities with individuals or businesses taken in by scams and the money sent overseas. There had been two businesses with compromised bank accounts, likely due to checks stolen through the mail. There was a scam costing banks around the country millions of dollars.

In February 2014, Eugene Police sent out a news release after a call from a man and his twin in another state who have received two calls from someone claiming to be from the Eugene Police Department advising that they have warrants for both their arrest and that they need to return the call immediately to ‘get this taken care of.’ This is not a practice EPD would use for a warrant.

There was a scam reported by a UO student in February, who sent $1,000 to “the IRS” using a pre-paid money card. He was told his bank account would be frozen and he would be arrested if he didn’t pay.

This trend is not new, in 2011, Eugene Police Fraud Unit received several calls about a resurfacing scam claiming the potential victim is the winner of a large prize. The perpetrator posing as an law enforcement officer would state the potential victim had won a large sum of money and in order to claim the winnings had to send “security” money. Criminals are continually crafting new scams geared toward separating you from your savings, or reprising old scams. Financial and internet crimes are some of the fastest growing crime trends.

There are so many scams out there: grandchild scam, secret shopper scam, foreign lottery scam, Craig’s list check scams, and more. A list of scams is provided on EPD’s website.
This document covers some of the most common scams we’ve seen in our area, but new ones are popping-up all the time.

Scammers tick you into handing over your cash, personal I.D., checking account numbers, and credit card information any way they can.

The Eugene Police Department would like to remind people to follow their instincts and never feel embarrassed about confirming the identity of a caller. This can be accomplished by contacting the represented agency directly via a published contact phone number and asking to speak with the individual directly or confirm the information with the agency’s non-emergency phone number. EPD’s non-emergency number is 541.682.5111. To report a scam, you can also call the EPD crime tip number at 541.682.8888.

These cases provide an opportunity for a reminder on how to avoid becoming the victim of fraud. Scams are cyclical in nature. Eugene Police recommend to remain careful and skeptical of callers:

- If someone asks you for your cash, credit card numbers or other personal information—especially if you don’t know them well—the safest move is to refuse their request and check with the police, or find an independent way to contact a legitimate business and follow up rather than responding right away to the caller.
- Don’t give out personal or financial information to someone who calls you. If you are unsure, hang up and independently find the phone number of the alleged represented agency and call yourself. A law enforcement agency will not ask you for this type of information or request that money be sent by way of money order for any reason.
- Beware of high pressure techniques, such as the need to give information or make a decision on the spot.
- If it sounds quirky or weird, it probably is.

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