

CHARLESTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Sheriff Kristin Graziano
3691 Leeds Avenue
North Charleston, SC 29405




NON-EMERGENCY
843-202-1700


CRIME STOPPERS
843-554-1111

Scammers target loved ones of people in jail

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2022

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. – Phone scammers are impersonating Charleston County Sheriff's Office deputies and tricking people into paying money to get loved ones out of jail.

The scheme is the latest wrinkle in a common tactic by criminals to pose as law enforcement officials and exploit common fears for personal gain. Typically, past scams have centered around threats of arrest for outstanding warrants or missed jury duty. Scammers often ask for payment in the form of prepaid debit cards, gift cards or electronic funds transfers.

Lately, the telephone callers have identified themselves as members of CCSO or the AI Cannon Detention Center, and have asked victims for money to bond out relatives. This is certainly not a new approach by the scammers, who often call people without knowing whether their prospective victims have a family member behind bars.

But we have seen some victims who actually had loved ones in jail. In recent cases reported to CCSO, one resident transferred \$1,500 through Cash App, one sent \$1,500 with Zelle and another sent \$4,000 through Cash App and Venmo. One caller urged the victim to pay up because their jailed loved one was in danger. These victims later became suspicious, made inquiries and found out that the calls were scams. But for most, the transaction had already gone through, and the money was gone.

The key takeaway? Law enforcement will not ask for payment over the phone. Our Detention Center does not call people seeking bail payments. Our Warrants Unit does not call people for money to resolve a warrant (deputies will make arrests to clear warrants, though).

Some tips for dealing with scammers:

Don't make an emotional decision. Slow down. Take a breath. Hang up. Ignore the message. Block the call.

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CONNECT WITH CCSO



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Be skeptical. Scammers may use real CCSO employee names, spoof real law enforcement phone numbers or create legitimate-looking email addresses. Don't trust your caller ID. Don't click any links!

Be careful. Do not give any caller your personal information, such as your full name, address and social security number, even if they already have some of those details.



Add protection. When using payment apps, turn on the "for purchases" slider if you don't know the recipient or if you're paying for goods or services. This tacks on a 3% fee for the recipient but adds protection for the payer, including full refunds of disputed transactions.

Research first. If you're concerned about the potential predicament described by the caller, make independent inquiries to determine if it's real (spoiler: it's likely not). For anything dealing with CCSO, including the Detention Center, reach us at 843-202-1700. For other agencies, call their non-emergency number.

Report any crime. If you've fallen victim to a scam in Charleston County, you can report it to us at the above number, or you can contact your local law enforcement. You also can report it to CCSO online at <https://sheriff.charlestoncounty.org/incident-reporting-form.php>.

With the holidays around the corner, this advice is more important than ever!

Note: Incident reports on these scams can be requested via email to pio@charlestoncounty.org. Photograph above shows the Al Cannon Detention Center on a recent day.

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