



PRESS RELEASE

Consumer Alert: Attorney General's Office Receives Reports of Imposter Law Enforcement Scam

BALTIMORE, MD (June 3, 2019) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh is warning consumers of a scam in which thieves posing as law enforcement swindle money from Marylanders by threatening arrest for missing jury duty or failure to appear as a witness.

Anyone can fall victim to this sophisticated scam. Reports indicate that it is affecting Marylanders in several counties. Here is what consumers report.

The scammer calls a potential victim, claiming falsely to be calling from a local police department or sheriff's office to tell them that they have missed a court date. The scammer may leave a message for a call back, and the caller ID often indicates a local area code. If the victim calls the number back, a recording suggests that they reached a legitimate law enforcement office. Once the caller is connected to a live person, that person tells the victim they missed jury duty, that a certified notice was signed by someone at their home, and that a bench warrant for their arrest has been issued for failure to attend jury duty and contempt of court.

In some reported cases, the scammer tells the victim that they must meet in person to resolve the issue. The scammer may provide the victim with an address belonging to an actual law enforcement location to appear legitimate. But once the victim arrives at that location, the scammer will then ask for payment (generally by gift card, prepaid cash card, or wire transfer) to immediately resolve the issue.

In other cases, the scammer tells the victim that there is a fine due for missing the court appearance, and that the victim *cannot* go to the local law enforcement department or they will be arrested. The scammer tells the victim that they can only pay the fine by wiring funds—no cash or checks are accepted. They may also tell the victim that if they pay the fine within a designated time that they only need to pay a portion of the fine.

Once the victim agrees to pay the fine, the scammer provides instruction on how to pay, and then will likely tell the victim that they must stay on the phone until the payment is complete. In a complaint received by the Consumer Protection Division, the scammer instructed the victim to use a MoneyPak card to pay the fine.

In addition to the above, the scammer may tell the victim that there is a “gag order” on their case so they cannot talk about it. They may also ask the victim to scan and email a copy of their driver’s license.

Under no circumstances should you pay any money, whether through MoneyPak or any other quick money transfer, to any person or group that claims to be a law enforcement officer even if they threaten you with arrest or fine. Nor should you email or reveal by telephone any personal information to anyone unless it is an exchange that you initiated.

If you do receive a call that tries to extort you in this way, follow these steps:

1. Hang up immediately.
2. Do NOT call the number shown on the caller ID.
3. Do NOT send your driver’s license information to anyone who calls claiming to be a law enforcement officer.
4. Report the suspicious call to the [Office of the Attorney General](#) or the [Federal Trade Commission](#).

If you have received a call like this and paid the caller any amount of money, or revealed any personal information via email or by phone, follow these steps:

1. Contact the company that facilitated the funds transfer to see if you can stop the payment.
2. Contact the Attorney General’s [Identity Theft Unit](#) to learn how to protect yourself if the scammers try to use your personal information.
3. Contact your local law enforcement department to report the theft.
4. Report the incident to the [Office of the Attorney General](#) or the [Federal Trade Commission](#).

“Only one person has to fall for this scam for the thieves to potentially make hundreds of dollars,” said Attorney General Frosh. “These scammers are very good at persuading anyone that they are in trouble with the law. But remember that legitimate law enforcement officers will NEVER ask you to pay a fine by wire transfer or any other rapid money transfer.”

The Maryland Courts have also issued an [alert](#) about this scam. Call our Consumer Protection Hotline at 410-528-8662 to speak with someone if you have questions about this or any other scam.