

FRAUD ALERT

Grandmother Scams

Earlier this year, our office reported that we had received several complaints about a Facebook scam in which the victims received fraudulent messages from friends and relatives in need via the social networking site. Recently, the Fraud Hotline received a call from a man who reported a similar con commonly known as the “Grandmother Scam.” His grandmother was defrauded out of \$4,600 when she wired money to Mexico; falsely believing the funds would be used to bail her grandson out of jail. Also referred to as “Emergency Scams” and “Friends in Need Scams,” criminals practicing these cons use the telephone or email to entice people into sending money — typically out of the country — to help relatives or friends who are in trouble. Victims of this scam receive an unexpected call or email from a loved one saying he or she needs you to wire cash to help them out of a jam — without letting anyone else know. The call or e-mail will often say the money is needed to fix a car, get out of jail, or leave a foreign country. Unfortunately, this caller or e-mailer is likely to be a scammer using a relative’s name.

The victim in this case reported the crime to local police and the Federal Trade Commission. Her grandson has placed a “fraud alert” on his credit report and notified his bank.

These scams have occurred worldwide for years. **DO NOT BECOME A VICTIM OF THIS FRAUD!** The Federal Trade Commission recommends you check the story out by calling the relative at a known number or verifying the story with other people in your family. You can also ask the caller some questions about the family that a stranger couldn’t possibly answer. Be specific in your questions. Today’s social media sites can provide a wealth of information to a scammer that was previously inaccessible years ago. To learn more about these and other scams, visit the Commission’s website: www.ftc.gov or by calling their hotline at 877-382-4357.

