



Columbia Heights Police Department (CHPD) Cautions to be Aware of Telephone Scams

Many of us have been the target, or know someone who has been the target of an attempted scam. The Columbia Heights Police Department is often called by its residents who report they have been the victim of a potential scam. Scam artists use all kinds of cunning schemes but often contact their victims by phone. Often the suspects of these scams are from out of state and anonymous, making it very difficult to prosecute or recover the stolen property.

In one of the most commonly reported cases, the scam artist calls and tells the victim he needs money wired to him immediately. For example the artist tells the victim she has won the sweepstakes and in order to redeem the huge sum of money, she must first send the scam artist a smaller check. Another scam artist contacts elderly by phone and tells them he is the grandchild and in desperate need of immediate funds. One business owner called police and reported he was told over the phone that he was behind on his utilities and needed to wire several hundred dollars within one hour or his utilities would be shut off. A scam artist may call soliciting donations for an organization and asks for a credit card number. These are just a few of the cases that are reported to police.

There are several things one can do to avoid being the next victim of swindle over the phone. Don't give personal information out over the phone to an unfamiliar person or organization. Ask the caller to provide information such as their website, email address, phone number, and location. Don't immediately believe things that seem too good to be true. **Most importantly, don't be pressured into making any immediate decisions.** Always get contact information from the caller and spend time to determine whether the organization or person is legitimate. If you have are still uncertain about the call, don't give any information, or call police for assistance.