Medical Alert Scam Targets Sick and Elderly

June 5, 2013 - A new medical alert scam is spreading across the country rapidly and it is targeting some of our most vulnerable citizens. So far, people living in Kentucky, Michigan, New York, Texas and Wisconsin have been targeted. Those falling for the scam could wind up getting hit with monthly bills or being targeted for identity theft.

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The scam is both simple and effective. Potential victims receive a phone call saying that a relative or friend has signed them up for a medical alert service similar to the ones you can see advertised on TV. The equipment has already been paid for. All the person receiving the call needs to do is to say "yes."

There are several different versions of the scam currently in operation. In some cases, victims receive a call from a live person. In others, they receive a robo-call. They are told that if they want to accept the system, they should simply press a button on their phone and hang up. Anyone who follows these instructions is likely to receive a follow-up call within a few minutes. That call will be from a real person who starts asking for several pieces of information including address, full name and for credit card information. The credit card is supposedly to cover the months charges associated with the system.

Victims may actually wind up getting a medical alert system installed and wind up with a bill of $30 or more per month. In these cases, they were probably actually targeted by an unscrupulous telemarketer using a technique known as "slamming" (which is illegal). In other cases, they may simply be turning over their credit information to someone who intends the steal their identity and go on a shopping spree.

Michigan's attorney general is currently investigating more than 50 cases of the scam. The FTC is also investigating and has already taken action against at least one firm for violating telemarketing laws. So far, those targeted appear to fall into one of three categories. They are elderly, disabled or diabetic.

Anyone receiving one of these calls should not provide any personal information to the person placing the call. If a relative of yours actually did order a service for you, the caller should already have your address information and no credit information should be required.

byJim Malmberg

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