An Old Telephone Scam That Refuses to Go Away and Gets More Sophisticated â€“ Jury Duty

August 12, 2015 â€“ It is has been several years since publishing our first warning on the jury duty telephone scam. It is typically a telemarketing scam in which the victim is told that an arrest warrant has been issued in their name for failure to show up for jury duty. The caller claims to work for a local law enforcement agency and demands a payment which will supposedly make the arrest warrant magically disappear. Yesterday, a neighbor of mine received one of these calls and he almost fell for it. And what he learned in that call makes it apparent that the scam has become a bit more sophisticated.

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It turns out that this particular neighbor also owns some rental property. The caller told him that his jury duty notice had been sent to another house that he owns but in which he has never lived. From my neighborâ€™s perspective, the fact that the caller had the address of his rental property provided a logical explanation as to why he never received the notice. It also shows that the call he received wasnâ€™t just at random. The caller had done a little research.

The amount of money the caller demanded to satisfy the warrant was $5,000. The recipient of the call was prepared to make payment with a credit card, right then and there. It was at this point that the scam fell apart.

The caller told him that he couldnâ€™t make payment with a credit card. He was also told that he couldnâ€™t run down to the local court house to make payment in person. Instead, he was instructed to go to a local store and purchase several pre-paid cards in denominations running from $100 to $500 and that he could make payment that way. After a few expletives were exchanged, he hung up the phone.

At ACCESS, we are unaware of any law enforcement agency that will call you to tell you that you are in trouble and that you need make a payment over the phone immediately. Variations of this scam have been taking place for years and victims are typically told that the caller is a member of their local police department, the IRS, the Social Security Administration, or any one of a number of other agencies. The IRS and other federal agencies never make this type of call. Nor do any other local police agencies that we are aware of.

The moral of this story is that just because the person on the other end of the phone may be in possession of information that you consider private â€“ in this case the correct address of another property owned by the targeted victim â€“ doesnâ€™t m that the call is legitimate. And just because you are well educated or consider yourself to be somewhat â€œstreet wiseâ€• doesn

mean that you canâ€™t be tricked into turning over your hard earned money.
byJim Malmberg
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