



Public Service Announcement

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION



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TELEPHONE SCAM ALLEGING A RELATIVE IS IN A FINANCIAL OR LEGAL CRISIS

The Internet Crime Complaint Center continues to receive reports of telephone scams involving calls that claim their “relative” is in a legal or financial crisis. These complaints are sometimes referred to as the “Grandparent Scam.” Scammers use scenarios that include claims of a relative being arrested or in a car accident in another country. Scammers often pose as the relative, create a sense of urgency and make a desperate plea for money to victims. It is not unusual for scammers to beg victims not to tell other family members about the situation.

The scammers also impersonate third parties, such as an attorney, law enforcement officer, or some other type of official, such as a U.S. Embassy representative. Once potential victims appear to believe the caller’s story, they are provided instructions to wire money to an individual, often referred to as a bail bondsman, for their relative to be released.

Some complainants have reported the callers claimed to be from countries including, but not limited to: Canada, Mexico, Haiti, Guatemala, and Peru.

Callers often disguise themselves by using telephone numbers generated by free applications or by spoofing their numbers.

If you receive this type of call:

- Resist the pressure to act quickly.
- Verify the information before sending any money by attempting to contact your relative to determine whether or not the call is legitimate.
- Never wire money based on a request made over the phone or in an e-mail, especially to an overseas location. Wiring money is like giving cash—once you send it, you cannot get it back.

Individuals who have fallen victim to this type of scam are encouraged to file a complaint with the Internet Crime Complaint Center, <https://www.ic3.gov>.