



St. Petersburg Police Department News Release



Media Relations Office

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Fraud Alert from the St. Petersburg Police Department

Recently citizens in St. Petersburg are reporting instances where they are receiving phone calls by individuals identifying themselves as law enforcement officers. These callers are claiming that the citizen has failed to appear for jury duty and will have to post a bond which will be refunded to them when they later appear in court.

Instructions are provided for the intended victim to purchase "Green Dot" Prepaid Cards (see attached photo) and to place a certain amount of cash on the card. They are provided with a phone number to immediately call back once the transaction is completed. When the victim calls the suspect back, they are asked to scratch off the back of the card and read off exposed serial number. This allows the suspect to transfer the money onto other cards before the victim realizes a scam has taken place.

One 84 year old victim recently lost \$12,000 in such a scam.

This fraud follows a pattern of similar past scams where victims are contacted on the phone by individuals claiming to represent various law enforcement agencies, mortgage companies, utility companies or other entities. The perpetrator will attempt to convince the victim that they must pay a fine or are in the arrears in payments on their accounts and must act immediately to avoid negative consequences. They are then instructed to purchase the "Green Dot" Prepaid Cards for the requisite amount and later asked to provide the card number so the scammers can withdraw the money.

St. Petersburg Police detectives remind everyone that law enforcement, governmental entities and legitimate businesses do not operate in such a manner. Citizens should immediately become suspicious if contacted on the phone by anyone suggesting such a form of payment for whatever reason stated. If contacted, do not comply with the caller's instruction, but instead hang up and contact your local law enforcement agency.

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