



Ontario Provincial Police
Police provinciale de l'Ontario

News Release/ Communiqué

FROM/DE: East Algoma OPP

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Emergency or “Grandparent Scam”

(Elliot Lake, Ontario) – Though the “Emergency Scam” (or sometimes referred to as the “Grandparent Scam”) has been around for years, the RCMP led Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (PhoneBusters) warns the public to be on alert after noting a marked increase in the number of complaints in the last few months.

Traditionally operating as a telemarketing scam throughout North America, fraudsters contact potential victims while posing as a family member or friend in urgent need of cash. Often the scenario involves an accident or arrest while traveling abroad, with a request that cash be sent through a money transfer company, such as Western Union or Money Gram.

There are commonly two methods used in an attempt to fulfill this scam.

1) In the typical scenario, a grandparent receives a phone call from con artist claiming to be one of his or hers grandchildren. The caller goes on to say that they are in some kind of trouble, usually a car accident, returning from a foreign country, or even bail money and need money immediately.

A typical call can go something like this:

Con-artist: Hi, Grandma/Grandpa
Victim: Hi.
Con artist: Do you know who this is?
Victim: John?
Con artist: Yeah.

Victims don't verify the story until after the money has been sent as the caller specifically asks that they do not want other relatives to know what has happened by asking, *“Can you please help me? I'm in jail (or in the hospital / or in some type of financial need). But don't tell Dad. He would kill me if he found out, please sent the money ASAP. I'm scared”*

Wanting to help their grandchild, the victim sends money by a money transfer company such as Money Gram or Western Union.

Variations on the scam exist such as an old neighbor, a friend of the family etc. but predominantly the emergency scam is directed toward the Grandparents.

(more)



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2) In a recent variation of this scam, compromised contact lists from hijacked email accounts are used to send the potential victim an “urgent” email request for money from a friend or relative with whom they have a correspondence. Common themes continue to be hospitalization or imprisonment while away from home. The friend is unaware that their account has been used to send out these requests to everyone on their contact list.

In 2008 there were 130 failed attempts reported to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre and 69 successful pleas – amounting to \$157,452.16.

By the end of October 2009, there were reported 278 failed attempts and 88 successful pleas – amounting to \$317,732.63.

For information on these and other scams go to Phonebusters website at:

www.phonebusters.com

It is impossible to relay all the different types of methods that scammers use but again ***if it sounds too good to be true it usually is.***

The East Algoma OPP and The Seniors Issues Office would like to remind you not to give out personal information. If in doubt contact authorities including banks, police or the Seniors Issues Office when you receive these types of contact so you don't become the next victim.

These types of scams can also be reported to PhoneBusters in North Bay at
1-888-495-8501

Remember not all Telemarketers or mailings you receive are scams but if you think that something doesn't sound right or look right and you are suspicious don't participate!

*Don't think that it **can't** happen to you. **IT CAN!** But only if you let it...!*

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- 30 -

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