

Common Phone Scams Targeting Seniors

Here are the five most common types of fraud targeting seniors, along with a brief description of how they work:

Grandparent scam: You get a phone call from someone posing as a grandchild who is supposedly out of town and in a desperate situation. They could claim to be locked in jail, have had a car accident or are in need of medical treatment. They'll want money wired to them.

Jury duty scam: This time the call is supposedly from someone at the courthouse who claims you failed to report for jury duty and a warrant has been issued for your arrest. You're then offered a choice to either pay for the warrant or have an officer sent over to arrest you. The fraudsters will typically demand that the money be paid by money transfer or by loading a prepaid card.

Lottery scam: While the other scams prey on fear and concern, this one aims to convince you that you've won money in foreign lottery. Never mind that you can't recall every entering one. The call will come from someone who sounds official. They'll ask for a payment up-front for supposed taxes and fees so you can collect your winnings.

IRS scam: This scam is quite similar to the jury duty scam, but takes advantage of most Americans' inherent fear of the Internal Revenue Service. The phone call purports to be from the police or an IRS agent who is demanding payment for overdue taxes. If they're not settled immediately, the call claims, you'll be arrested. They'll want the money either wired or put on prepaid card.

Utility scam: This is another fear-based scam that involves convincing you that the utility company is about to cut off service due to unpaid bills. The scammers will naturally want money sent to them by money transfer or a prepaid card.