

Seattle Police Email Community Newsletter

February 12, 2016



Dear Community Friends,

It's Scamming Season

Seattle Police have received several complaints of various scams in the past several weeks. We wanted to highlight a few of them here to raise awareness and offer advice to avoid falling prey to them.

Vacation Rental Property Scam

In Late December 2015, a scam victim tried to purchase a vacation rental in Whistler, British Columbia, through Airbnb.com. The property had photos on the website but no listed address. The victim began communication with the publisher of the posting via email; the victim agreed to wire transfer \$4000 to the publisher in exchange for rental rights to the property. Once the wire transfer went through, the victim was unable to make contact with the publisher and did not receive any keys or instructions on how to proceed. The victim contacted Airbnb.com and was told that they would be unable to assist because the financial services offered by the Airtbnb.com website were not used to complete the transaction.

When using a site like Airbnb, book directly through the site using the services they offer. This provides a protection for you. If the described above should happen to you, or if the arrangements don't seem quite right, please let that booking site know.

Arrest Warrant Scam

In late January, at least two individuals reported receiving phone calls from a "Captain Ryan Rawlins" with the U.S. Federal Marshall's Office, who told the victims that they had been sent jury summons in December 2015 and had never shown up; since they had failed to appear for jury duty, warrants had been issued for their arrest. Both targets of this scam were skeptical of "Captain Rawlins" and questioned the validity of his claims. The more they questioned, the more threatening and insistent "Captain Rawlins" became. One was told that Federal Marshalls would come to her residence and arrest her if she did not pay a \$1,500 fee; that she would spend the night in jail if she didn't pay him and would have to talk to a judge. "Captain Rawlins" told her to go to her bank and pull out the money in cash and then load the money onto two Kroger gift cards. With the other scam target, "Captain Rawlins" told her that if she continued to be uncooperative, he would simply send an "Apprehension Team" to her residence to have her immediately arrested. He further told her that she was under house arrest and as a result her cell phone was being used to monitor her movements, and she could not hang up until she met him at the courthouse where she would deliver to him a Kroger gift card in the amount \$595.06. "Captain Rawlins" had several phone calls with both of the above targets in the course of their interactions, spending well over three and a half hours of total talk time on the phone with just one of the scam targets.

First thing to note, no Law Enforcement Officer or employee is going to keep you on the phone for hours.
We don't like to talk that much.

No Law Enforcement Officer will call you on the phone to tell you about an outstanding arrest warrant.

No Law Enforcement Officer will demand payment over the phone to quash the warrant.

No Law Enforcement Officer will ask for payment information over the phone, let alone ask for that payment in the form of a prepaid card.

IRS Scam

In this scam, currently making the rounds, an impersonator claims to be with the Internal Revenue Service or the Treasury Inspector General's Office and states that there is an issue with previous year's taxes. The caller goes on to advise there will be a lawsuit filed against you or say that you are subject to immediate arrest, if you don't pay X-amount immediately, etc. They may ask for money to be wired or paid with some type of prepaid card.

What To Do

If you receive one of these calls, the best thing to do is hang up. Take a moment and breathe. Do not give out any information or any money to anyone claiming to be with any government or law enforcement agency asking for money to be paid over the phone, especially when you have no reason to suspect you owe money. If the IRS or any government entity needs to inform you of a debt, it will be by mail. Even if you receive a letter before the call, as some call receivers have, the main point is that money would not be asked to be paid over the phone by means of a wire or prepaid cards.

If you have received the IRS scam phone call but *did not* provide any information or send money, but would like to report this scam and associated number please contact the respective institution.

- To report scam to the IRS: phishing@irs.gov
- To report scam to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration: 1800-366-4484
- To check if you do owe taxes call the IRS at 1800-829-1040

If *you have* sent money to the scammers, or provided sensitive information such as a social security number or birthdate, please file a police report by calling 206-625-5011.

For a list of fraud and scams, and measures to avoid falling victim to them, please check the Federal Bureau of Investigations website at <https://www.fbi.gov/scams-safety>.

Please report the attempted scam. Give us as much information as possible, including the phone number from which you receive the call if you can retrieve that information.

Question of the Month

My neighbors and I are interested in meeting with you to discuss safety & security in our neighborhood. How do we go about setting up a neighborhood meeting with you?

I'm happy to meet with you and your neighbors. First thing to do is compare calendars to see when would be best for us all to meet. Once we have a date, time and location where we can get the bulk of the neighbors together, we'll get it booked. I'll go over incidents that have occurred in your particular area, overall crime trends for the Precinct and your specific neighborhood, particular categories were working to address at the Precinct level (such as shots fired, street robberies, and non-residential burglaries, for example). If there are specific issues of concern you want to make sure gets addressed (a particular crime type, a "problem" house or business, etc.), please let me know so I can be prepared to discuss and work with you to develop solutions and responses.

Thank you for all you do for your community. Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

Mark Solomon, Crime Prevention Coordinator
South & Southwest Precincts, Seattle Police Department
206.386.9766, Mark.solomon@seattle.gov

<http://www.seattle.gov/police/>

<http://www.SPDBlotter.Seattle.gov>

<http://www.seattle.gov/police/tweets/>

