

Scam Alert-Callers Posing as Law Enforcement

A new nationwide phone scam is now happening with increasing frequency in Santa Barbara County.

Here is how the scam works:

Phone scammers are calling Santa Barbara residents claiming to be calling from the Sheriff's Department. The call sounds legitimate because these sophisticated scammers are able to manipulate Caller ID systems so your incoming phone call actually appears to be coming directly from the Sheriff's Department.

The caller then claims to be a Sheriff's Department employee informing you that you have an outstanding warrant and will be arrested if you do not immediately pay the fine that is owed. You are then instructed to wire money or use a pre-paid credit card to pay your outstanding fine otherwise you will be arrested. Oftentimes, these scam artists will have some of your personal information found on the internet.

Here is information to help protect yourself from this scam:

- The Sheriff's Department does NOT call residents who have warrants out or who owe a fine.
- If you get such a call, please hang up and immediately contact the law enforcement agency supposedly making the call to see if they did in fact contact you for any reason.
- Never give out your personal information over the phone.
- Do not wire or send money to a third party you do not know.
- If you feel pressured to pay or wire money, it is most likely a scam.
- Always initiate a call back and talk with a loved one or trusted adviser before sending money.