

**POULSBO POLICE
DEPARTMENT**



200 NE Moe Street
Poulsbo, Washington 98370
(360) 779-3113

Dan Schoonmaker, Chief of Police

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, May 14, 2019

PHONE SCAMS

Poulsbo, WA: Over the past 24 hours, the Poulsbo Police Department has received two reports of phone scams.

In each case, the victims were contacted on their mobile device by the suspect. The caller identification phone number showed (360) 779-3113, which is the main number to the Poulsbo Police Department. This is a common trick by scammers, referred to as “spoofing”.

In each case, the suspect told the victims that they were government officials (IRS, Department of Justice, US Marshalls, or similar) and were calling about credit issues and/or warrants for their arrest. The suspect asked the victims to confirm personal information, such as dates of birth and social security numbers. The suspect then told the victims their “issues” could be resolved if the victim electronically sent gift cards for various retailers to the suspect.

The Poulsbo Police Department is sending this press release out as a public safety announcement to the community so they can be aware of this scam. ***It is important to know that Federal, State and local governments never ask for payments in the form of gift cards.***

Here are some general tips from the Federal Trade Commission website on phone scams:

When you get a call from a telemarketer, ask yourself:

- **Who’s calling... and why?** The law says telemarketers must tell you it’s a sales call, the name of the seller and what they’re selling before they make their pitch. If you don’t hear this information, say “no thanks,” and get off the phone.
- **What’s the hurry?** Fast talkers who use high pressure tactics could be hiding something. Take your time. Most legitimate businesses will give you time and written information about an offer before asking you to commit to a purchase.
- **If it’s free, why are they asking me to pay?** Question fees you need to pay to redeem a prize or gift. Free is free. If you have to pay, it’s a purchase — not a prize or a gift.
- **Why am I “confirming” my account information — or giving it out?** Some callers have your billing information before they call you. They’re trying to get you to say “okay” so they can claim you approved a charge.

- **What time is it?** The law allows telemarketers to call **only** between 8 am and 9 pm. A seller calling earlier or later is ignoring the law.
- **Do I want more calls like this one?** If you don't want a business to call you again, say so and register your phone number on the [National Do Not Call Registry](#). If they call back, they're breaking the law.

Some Additional Guidelines

- Resist pressure to make a decision immediately.
- Keep your credit card, checking account, or Social Security numbers to yourself. Don't tell them to callers you don't know — even if they ask you to “confirm” this information. That's a trick.
- Don't pay for something just because you'll get a “free gift.”
- Get all information in writing before you agree to buy.
- [Check out a charity](#) before you give. Ask how much of your donation actually goes to the charity. Ask the caller to send you written information so you can make an informed decision without being pressured, rushed, or guilted into it.
- If the offer is an investment, check with your [state securities regulator](#) to see if the offer — and the offeror — are properly registered.
- Don't send cash by messenger, overnight mail, or money transfer. If you use cash or a money transfer — rather than a credit card — you may lose your right to dispute fraudulent charges. The money will be gone.
- Don't agree to any offer for which you have to pay a “registration” or “shipping” fee to get a prize or a gift.
- Research offers with your [consumer protection agency or state Attorney General's office](#) before you agree to send money.
- Beware of offers to “help” you [recover money](#) you have already lost. Callers that say they are law enforcement officers who will help you get your money back “for a fee” are scammers.
- Report any caller who is rude or abusive, even if you already sent them money. They'll want more. Call 1-877-FTC-HELP or visit [ftc.gov/complaint](#).

For more information on phone scams, please visit the Federal Trade Commission website at:

<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/paying-scammers-gift-cards>