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News Release

March 10, 2015

Telemarketing Fraud

Sheriff Champagne would like to remind residents that telephone scams are at an all-time high. Scammers are claiming to be the IRS demanding payment on back taxes. These same scammers are also calling victims saying that their family member has been in an accident and demanding money for their safe return. The majority of the time these scams are from outside of the country. When you send money to people you do not know personally or give personal or financial information to unknown callers, you increase your chances of becoming a victim of telemarketing fraud.

Here are a few tips from Sheriff Champagne to avoid being scammed:

- If you get a call saying you're a winner – don't pay any money to collect supposed sweepstakes winnings. Legitimate operations won't require you to pay to collect your winnings.
- Know that wiring money is like sending cash. Con artists often insist that people wire money, especially overseas, because it's nearly impossible to reverse the transaction or trace the money. Don't wire money to strangers, to sellers who insist on wire transfers for payment, or to anyone who claims to be a relative or friend in an emergency and wants to keep the request a secret.
- Don't agree to deposit a check and wire money back. By law, banks have to make funds from deposited checks available within days, but uncovering a fake check can take weeks. You're responsible for the checks you deposit: If a check turns out to be a fake, you're responsible for paying back the bank. No matter how convincing the story, someone who overpays with a check is almost certainly a scam artist.
- Don't reply to messages asking for personal or financial information. It doesn't matter whether the message comes as an email, a phone call, a text message, or an ad. Don't click on links or call phone numbers included in the message, either. It's called phishing. The crooks behind these messages are trying to trick you into revealing sensitive information. If you got a message like this and you are concerned about your account status, call the number on your credit or debit card — or your statement — and check on it.
- Report Scams – if you think you have been scammed immediately notify your local Sheriff's Office.