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Press Release

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FRAUDULENT PHONE SCAMS REPORTED ACROSS POLK COUNTY

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There has been a **SIGNIFICANT INCREASE** in fraudulent phone scams being reported across Polk County over the past year. We at the Polk County Sheriff's Office are seeing multiple people fall victim to a variety of phone scams, predominantly victimizing our senior citizens. We want to remind everyone to be aware of these scams and to be watchful for what is occurring. The exact number of different scams out there is unknown however they all seem to revolve around one nexus; in most cases the criminal involved in these scams are threatening immediate action or arrest unless immediate payment is made over the phone.

Here are a few of the more popular scams being reported:

FAMILY MEMBER IN JAIL PHONE SCAM

This phone scam involves a criminal who identifies themselves as a family member and/or Law Enforcement Officer requesting money. The suspect in this case states that a family member has been involved in an accident or has been arrested for a crime and needs money to be released from jail and/or the hospital.

The suspect informs the victim to send a MoneyGram for a sum of money (i.e. \$2,000) to an unknown individual. A short time after the victim sends the money to the suspect, the suspect calls and requests additional money stating someone was injured/died as a result of the accident/arrest, or for additional medical or for the purchase of a rental vehicle.

This is a scam that has been going around for a few years. If you received calls of this nature please report them to your local law enforcement agency.

IRS PHONE SCAM:

This scam involves a criminal who identifies themselves as an employee of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The suspect in this scam tells the victim they owe back taxes, and immediate payment is required to avoid arrest.

If you receive calls of this nature hang up and do not call the given number back. Please contact the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) to report the call. Use their "[IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting](https://www.treasury.gov/tigta/contact_report_scam.shtml)" web page:

(https://apps.irs.gov/app/scripts/exit.jsp?dest=https://www.treasury.gov/tigta/contact_report_scam.shtml).

You can also call 1-800-366-4484.

JURY DUTY PHONE SCAM:

This scam involves a criminal who identifies themselves as Polk County Deputy "Jim Lewis". The suspect in this case advises the victim(s) that they owe money (\$2,500) for failing to show up for jury duty. The victims are threatened with a fine (\$400/day) until the money is paid in full.

Neither the Polk County Sheriff's Office, nor any of its employees will call any citizen by phone demanding money. If you received calls of this nature please report them to your local law enforcement agency.

UTILITY PHONE SCAM:

This scam involves a criminal who identifies themselves as a utility employee. The suspect in this case tells the victim(s) that they are late in making their monthly utility payment. The suspect demands immediate payment over the phone or their utility service will be disconnected.

If you receive a call of this nature please hang up and contact your utility service at the listed number published in the phone book or on their website to verify.

LAWSUIT PHONE SCAM:

This scam involves a call from a recorded service stating that a federal law suit will be filed and that the County Sheriff will come and arrest you if you do not take action immediately and call the listed number back. The number given in the reported calls is a (804) area code, however this number could change.

If you receive this type of call hang up and do not call the given number back.

These incidents, along with any similar incidents are indeed false.

This type of activity is a crime and will be investigated and taken very seriously. Anyone receiving this type of telephone notification should not comply with payment. If a call like this is received, don't offer revealing personal information and ask specific questions. Anything suspicious in nature should be reported to local law enforcement.

Please be vigilant and spread the word to your friends, family and coworkers.