

Hello BASC Friends,

Sharing with you a message from the Berrien County Sheriff's Department warning about scammers posing as the Sheriff's Office.

Please be careful!

FROM THE BERRIEN COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
11/17/2020

Deputies once again warning about scammers posing as the Sheriff's Office

The Berrien County Sheriff's Office is once again letting everyone know that a phone call in which someone claims to be with their office and attempts to ask for money or payments is a scam and as any scenario like that always will be.

The scam goes like this:

You get a phone call, and the caller claims to be with the sheriff's office (or a local law enforcement agency), telling you that they have a warrant for your arrest.

It's usually for a reason that your first instinct may be to wonder if you missed something important, like telling you, you failed to answer a subpoena or missed jury duty.

Sometimes they may identify themselves as a randomly chosen position and name, like "Lt. Smith", which was recently used by scammers, despite the fact that the sheriff's office employs no one by that name. The scammers will also look up local information on deputies and county employees' names and use those names to make the scam more believable.

The number that shows up on your phone could be a number 'spoofed' to look like it's coming from a 269 area code, or it could even be made to look like it's coming from the Sheriff's Office, Berrien County, IRS and/or Treasury Department.

Once you're told that there's a warrant for your arrest, the caller lets you know you'll only be arrested, if you refuse to pay bond or the stated amount.

A lot of scammers in these kinds of calls may even pretend to transfer you to the "Sheriff," who is really someone else or the same person carrying out the scam, but the calls always end the same way.

The caller will instruct you to purchase some kind of gift card, usually either a green dot card (a kind of prepaid credit card) or a VISA card in very specific amounts and then call them back with the numbers or mail the cards and receipts to provide payment.

If you go through with providing the numbers for payment, they may also ask you to bring the card to the Sheriff's Office for verification, but by the time you would have arrived at the Sheriff's Office, the money will be gone off the cards.

It is impossible to refund or get the money back from these pre-paid cards or gift cards, which is why this is the most popular request form of payment from scammers.

This is a classic phone scam that comes in many varieties: people claiming to be tech support, impersonating the IRS, posing as grandchildren in trouble and often pretending to be the police.

But the Berrien County Sheriff's Office, or any police department, will never call you to ask you to provide finances of any sort to them under the threat of arrest. If you're ever unsure about the legitimacy of a call from someone claiming to be law enforcement, hang up and then call your local law enforcement agency directly.

Below are some helpful tips to help avoid falling victim to a telephone scams:

- Be suspicious of callers who demand immediate payments.
- Never give out personal or financial information to unsolicited callers, including: account numbers, social security numbers, passwords or other identifying information.
- Never wire money, provide debt or credit card numbers or Green Dot, Money Pak or Pre-Paid Credit Card numbers to someone you do not know.
- If you get an inquiry from someone who says they represent a company or a government agency seeking personal information, hang up and call the phone number on your account statement or agency's website to verify the authenticity of the call/request.
- Don't answer calls from numbers you don't know. With spoofing becoming more common, question the number on the caller ID. Be cautious and verify the person on the other end of the phone.
- Don't be afraid to tell the caller you know that it is a scam and you are reporting them to the police. Always share suspicious calls with a trusted friend, family member, or call local police if you feel you might have fallen victim to a scam.