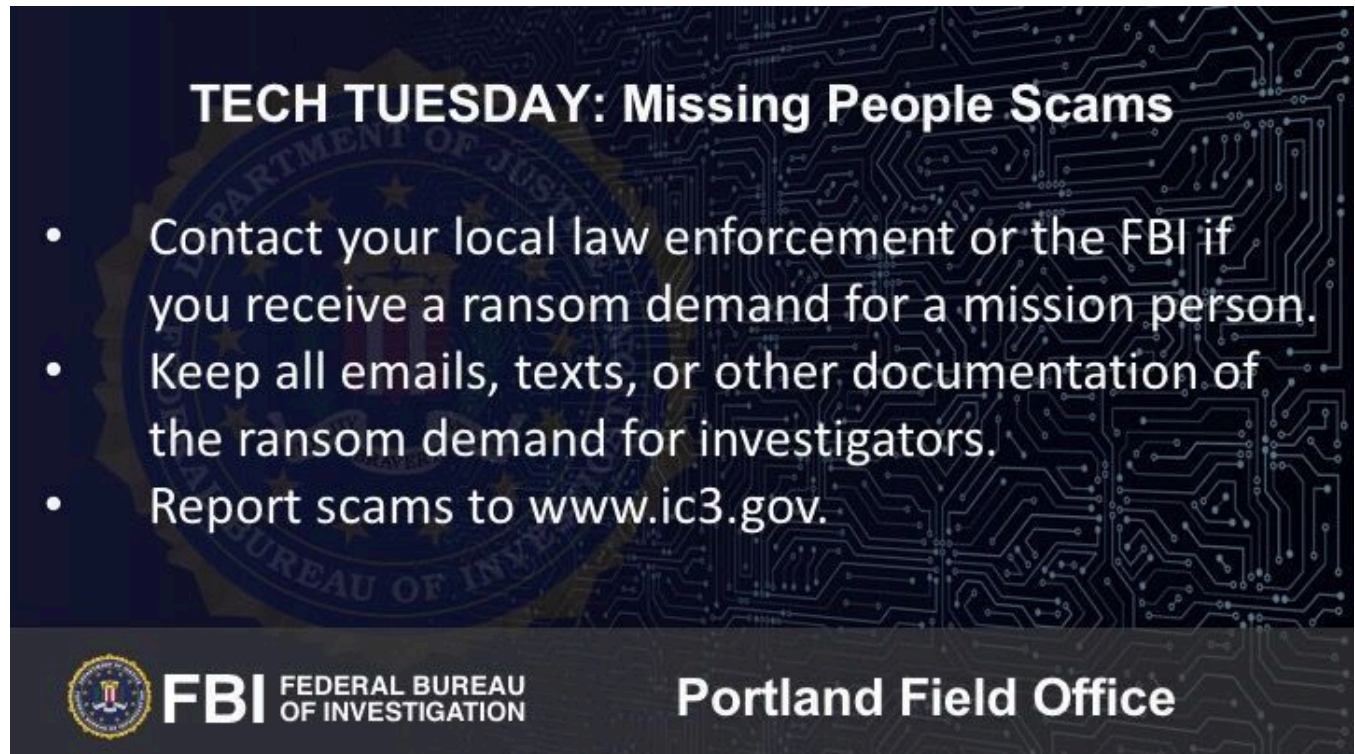


Tech Tuesday: Building a Digital Defense Against Missing People Scams

August 10, 2021

A graphic with a dark blue background featuring a circuit board pattern. In the center is a large, faint circular seal of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Overlaid on the seal is the text "TECH TUESDAY: Missing People Scams" in white. Below this, there is a bulleted list of three items. At the bottom left is the FBI logo and the text "FBI FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION". At the bottom right is the text "Portland Field Office".

TECH TUESDAY: Missing People Scams

- Contact your local law enforcement or the FBI if you receive a ransom demand for a missing person.
- Keep all emails, texts, or other documentation of the ransom demand for investigators.
- Report scams to www.ic3.gov.

FBI FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Portland Field Office

Welcome to the Oregon FBI's Tech Tuesday segment. Today: Building a digital defense against scammers targeting families searching for missing people.

You see it every day on Facebook or other social media platforms. A family member posts that their teenager has disappeared or senior parent has not returned from a trip out of the house. The goal, of course, is to crowdsource the missing person's recovery.

Here's where the fraudster can come in: after identifying a missing person on social media, scammers research details of the disappearance, the missing person, and the missing person's family. The scammers often obtain telephone numbers for the family members on social media and use third-party calling or messaging apps to call to make ransom demands. The demand usually ranges from \$5,000 to \$10,000, with \$7,000 being a common amount.

Generally, offenders do not offer proof of life, although there is at least one instance where the scammer called the family pretending to be the victim. Offenders often claim the missing person is ill or injured,

adding to the urgency of the situation and putting additional pressure on family members to pay the ransom.

If you are the target or victim of an extortion attempt related to a missing person:

Contact your local law enforcement agency or your local FBI field office (contact information can be found at www.fbi.gov)

Keep all original documentation, emails, text messages, and logs of communication with the subject. Do not delete anything before law enforcement is able to review it; and

Tell law enforcement everything about the online encounters - it may be embarrassing for the parent or missing person, but it is necessary to find the offender. When reporting online scams, be as descriptive as possible in the complaint form by providing:

Name and/or user name of the subject

Email addresses and telephone numbers used by the subject

Web sites used by the subject

Description of all interaction with the subject

If you are the victim of any online fraud, you should also report the incident to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at **www.ic3.gov** or call your FBI local office.