

FBI issues scam alert

June 10, 2024



The FBI Portland Division has seen an increase in reports of scammers falsely representing themselves as FBI agents, or a representative of another government agency, and sending couriers to pick up cash or gold payments.

The FBI states in a release to be advised, federal agencies do not call or email individuals threatening arrest or demanding money.

Scammers often spoof caller ID information, and these phone calls are fraudulent even if they appear to be coming from an agency's legitimate phone number. Recipients should hang up immediately and report the call.

There are many versions of the government impersonation scam, and they all exploit intimidation tactics, according to the FBI. Typically, scammers will use an urgent and aggressive tone, refusing to speak to or leave a message with anyone other than their targeted victim; and will urge victims not to tell anyone else, including family, friends, or financial institutions, about what is occurring.

Payment is demanded in various forms, in this new version of the scam, victims are asked to withdraw money as either cash or gold and give that to a courier who arrives at their home. Other tactics include prepaid cards, wire transfers, and cash, sent by mail or inserted into cryptocurrency ATMs. Victims are asked to read prepaid card numbers over the phone or text a picture of the card.

Targets

According to the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), 14,190 people reported being victims of government impersonation scams in 2023, with losses totaling more than \$394 million dollars. Here in the Portland Division, which includes all of Oregon, financial losses exceeded \$1.7 million dollars in 2023.

The scammers typically target older adults.

In 2023, almost half the complainants reported to be over 60 (40%), and experienced 58% of the losses (almost \$770 million) nationally. Complainants over the age of 60 lost more to these scams than all other age groups combined, and reportedly remortgaged/foreclosed homes, emptied retirement accounts, and borrowed from family and friends to cover losses in these scams. Some incidents have resulted in suicide because of shame or loss of sustainable income.

The FBI will never:

Call or email private citizens to demand payment or threaten arrest. You will also not be asked to wire a “settlement” to avoid arrest.

Ask you to use large sums of your own money to help catch a criminal.

Ask you for wire transfers or gift cards.

Call you about “frozen” Social Security numbers or to coordinate inheritances.

Scams impersonating the FBI and other government agencies are a persistent problem and can also occur via email. Common hallmarks of a scam email include misspellings, missing words, and incorrect grammar. Fraudulent emails may give the appearance of legitimacy by using pictures of the FBI Director and/or the FBI seal and letterhead.

Members of the public seeking to confirm that they have been contacted by an actual FBI employee are encouraged to call the FBI Portland Division at 503-224-4181 and ask to be connected directly.

If you think you are a victim of this, or any other online scam please file a report with your local law enforcement agency and the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) at ic3.gov.

More information about government impersonation schemes and other online fraud schemes can be found at <https://www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/common-fraud-schemes>.