

Don't Fall Victim to Scammers Claiming Affiliation with Worcester County Sheriff's Office



[West Boylston] - Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis is issuing a warning to residents regarding a recent phone scam involving the Sheriff's Office. The phone scammer poses as an employee of the Sheriff's Office and informs the victim that they have an arrest warrant or charges filed in their name or that of a loved one. The scammer then demands payment of a fine to avoid being arrested and serving jail time.

Another common phone scam involves telling individuals they have missed jury duty, which also results in a fine.

"Unfortunately, we recently received a report of an individual who was scammed out of over \$20,000," commented Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. "With the amount of information sharing and readily available data on consumer habits, scammers may know where you bank, the products you buy, or the names of your loved ones. Scam artists will go to any length to trick you into sharing personal information or issuing irreversible payments."

According to the Federal Communications Commission, or FCC, this type of scam is called spoofing. Spoofing is when a scammer deliberately falsifies the information transmitted to your caller ID display to disguise their identity. Scammers often use neighbor spoofing so it appears that an incoming call is coming from a local number or spoof a number from a company or a government agency that you may already know and trust.

In the case of the Sheriff's Office scam, the scammers use the names of actual officers and "spoof" the department's phone number. The scammer asks for money to clear up a non-existent warrant. In some instances, the caller requests that payments be made in the form of gift certificates or via apps such as Venmo or Cash App. The scammer will then

have the victim remain on the line until the victim purchases the gift certificates or relays specific financial information to the scammer.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office encourages people to be aware of calls like this and to never give personal or financial information over the phone to anyone whom you didn't call yourself.

"Our department does not contact residents and demand payment or ask for credit card information. Today's scam artists are always testing new tactics. Residents need to beware of any unsolicited calls that ask for their personal or financial information," commented Sheriff Evangelidis. "These callers can sound convincing, may be aggressive, and try to intimidate you with threats of jail time or steep fines. We encourage anyone who gets a suspicious call to hang up and contact their associated institutions directly to verify any requests."

