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Grandparent Scam Taking Advantage of Trusting Seniors An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

By Cathy Tyson



The City of Lafayette Police Department is alerting residents to a recent crime trend that is affecting our neighborhoods. The purpose of this bulletin is to prevent additional residents from falling victim to this type of crime.

Scammers preying on elderly victims are at it again, according to Lafayette Chief of Police Eric Christensen. "We've seen a dramatic increase in the amount of email and telephone scams lately," said Christensen. The latest ruse involves a phone call allegedly from the consulate in Lima, Peru claiming a granddaughter or grandson is in danger or has been arrested and needs from \$1,000 to \$1,800 in order to pay a fine and be released from jail. Would-be criminals instruct potential victims to get cash out of their bank, then use Western Union to send the funds to Peru. Recently a quick-thinking clerk at a CVS store with a Western Union outlet was able to persuade a senior citizen that it was a scam.

The chief offers this advice: if a mystery solicitor claims a grandchild or loved one is in trouble and needs money to resolve the situation, take a few minutes to attempt to contact that person to verify if they are indeed in trouble. Next, if you have any questions, call the police. "We're here to help," said Christensen.

He adds that these crimes are difficult to solve, criminals use a voice over IP internet phone connection that

is difficult to track, and in the Lima case, in this bustling city of over nine million people, there are more than a few Western Union offices. The Diplomatic Security Service is investigating, but the chief points out, "If it didn't work, they (criminals) wouldn't do it." Another scam making the rounds locally is an email from a couple allegedly robbed in Baleares, Spain who needs to raise money to fly back home.

In an effort to prevent further crimes, the Lafayette police department distributed Crime Bulletin flyers to banks and Western Union operations to alert staff to be aware of the Grandparent Scam and pass those flyers on to folks possibly being swindled. Bottom line: when in doubt, call police at (925) 284-5010.

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