

Imposter Scams

By: OnGuardOnline.gov

Scammers may pose as people you know and trust, and then make desperate appeals for cash to deal with an emergency. Their goal is to trick you into sending money before you realize it's a scam.

The Bait:

You get a call, email, or text out of the blue from someone claiming to be a family member or friend who says he needs you to wire cash to help him out of a jam – to fix a car, get out of jail, pay a hospital bill, or leave a foreign country. But he wants you to keep his request a secret from other family members. There might be a second person in on the scheme – someone who claims to be an authority figure, like a judge, lawyer, or police officer. These callers may claim that your friend won't be allowed to leave the country unless you send money right away.

The Catch:

It's surprisingly easy for scammers to impersonate a trusted friend, family member, or organization. If you send money, it's likely that you'll get requests for more money.

What You Can Do:

If someone calls claiming to be a family member in trouble, check the story out with other people in your family. You also can ask the caller questions that a stranger couldn't possibly answer.

Report Online Scams

If you believe you've responded to an online scam, file a complaint with:

- The Federal Trade Commission
- The FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center
- Your state Attorney General