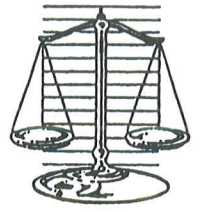




CITY OF PARMA OHIO

LAW DEPARTMENT



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LAW DIRECTOR ADVISORY CAR ACCIDENT PHONE SCAM

It has come to the attention of the City of Parma Law Director's office that Parma residents are once again at risk of becoming victims to a phone scam. In two (2) separate instances, Parma residents have received a call from a private number, claiming that a loved one was in a car accident. The caller used personal information to try to persuade/trick the resident into paying money. Once the resident realized that this was a scam, they hung up the phone and informed the proper authorities.

During these phone calls, the caller pretended to be related to someone who was in an accident. The caller would claim that the resident's relative caused the accident and that the caller's relative was wanted for murder. The caller then urged the resident to "pay up" if they did not want anything bad to happen.

The caller will use public information to make these call seem genuine and real. The caller will ask for you by name, may know the name of your loved one, as well as the color and make of your relative's car. Do not let this information fool you. This is a scammer who is going to great lengths to locate personal information about yourself in order to create a believable scenario in order to get a payoff.

Below are a few tips to protect yourself from and avoid any potential scams:

- **Verify an Emergency:** Resist the urge to act immediately, no matter how dramatic the story. Verify the person's identity by asking questions that a stranger couldn't possibly answer. Should you believe caller to be legitimate, ask for a call back number. If the phone call references a family member or friend, contact them to ensure they are alright. Check the story out with someone else in your family or circle of friends, even if you've been told to keep it a secret. Don't wire money — or send a check or money order by overnight delivery or courier. Report possible fraud at ftc.gov/complaint or by calling 1-877-FTC-HELP.

- **Do not fall for their tricks:** They impersonate your loved one convincingly. It's surprisingly easy for a scam artist to impersonate someone. Social networking sites make it easier than ever to sleuth out personal and family information. Scammers also could hack into the e-mail account of someone you know. To make their story seem legitimate, they may involve another crook who claims to be an authority figure, like a lawyer or police officer.
- **Do not let them play on your emotions:** Scammers are banking on your love and concern to outweigh your skepticism. In one version of this scam, con artists impersonate grandchildren in distress to trick concerned grandparents into sending money. Sometimes, this is called a "Grandparent Scam."
- **Do not be sworn to secrecy:** Con artists may insist that you keep their request for money confidential – to keep you from checking out their story and identifying them as imposters. Victims of this scam often don't realize they've been tricked until days later, when they speak to their actual family member or friend who knows nothing about the "emergency." By then, the money they sent can't be recovered.
- **Do not send them money ever:** Scammers pressure people into wiring money because it's like sending cash – once it's gone, you can't trace it or get it back. Imposters encourage using money transfer services so they can get your money before you realize you've been scammed. It is important to note that if you are being pressured to act immediately, hang up the phone as it is most likely a fraudulent call.

The Parma Law Director's office encourages Parma residents to be aware of these potential threats. Do not trust unfamiliar or unidentified callers. Should you believe you were contacted by a scam service, do not hesitate to call and report your suspicions to the Parma Police Department Non-Emergency Number at (440) 885-1234 and the Federal Trade Commission at (877) FTC-HELP or ftc.gov/complaint. In addition, it is also recommended that you monitor your credit file to insure that no other damage was done by the scammers. If you believe your credit to be compromised, contact your bank and credit card companies immediately to put a hold on your account.