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Technical Support Scams

The technical support scam is a type of scam that is becoming more and more prevalent in the current technological environment. Although anyone can fall victim, the callers prefer to target seniors.

The technical support scam generally begins with a phone call from a blocked or international number (although it has been recently reported that these scammers are also using local numbers). The cybercriminal scammer will identify themselves as a certified technician for Microsoft, Apple or other well-known technology company in order to convince people that their services are legitimate.

Using scare tactics, the scammer will urgently claim that he has received notification that there is a virus or issue with the senior's computer. The scammer may even ask to remotely control the senior's computer to "install software" that allows him to assist the senior with their technological issue. Lastly, in order to "clean the PC and fix the problem," the scammer will ask for payment of several hundred dollars via credit card or online payment. Of course, there's no real problem with the computer.... and nothing gets fixed.

Should you resist payment after providing the scammer with access to your computer, the scammer may get angry and threaten to destroy the computer or dig through your personal information such as your email account or any payment accounts on your computer.

It should be of note that rarely (if ever) will anyone be notified or be able to discern whether your computer has a virus or issue without prior access to your computer or physically sitting down in front of your computer and running diagnostic tests.

If you believe you are having computer issues and are unsure what to do, you will be much better off contacting one of the following:

- The manufacturer of your computer model (Dell, Apple, Gateway, etc.);
- If you have a computer warranty, whoever executes that warranty;
- A trusted family member with computer experience;
- A certified computer technician in your local community

Please be aware that technical support scams are becoming commonplace as technology progresses. Do not fall victim. In the event that you are faced with such a situation, please consider contacting:

- The Parma Police Department at 440-885-1234;
- The Cuyahoga County Department of Consumer Affairs at 216-443-7035;
- The Ohio Office of the Attorney General – State Consumer Protection at 614-466-4986

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