



DenverDA

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SPOT A SCAM -- Virtual Kidnapping

A new twist on the Grandparent Scam is making its way through Denver. This happened just last week. Luckily, the potential victim was savvy enough to spot-a-scam. Let's see if you would be as aware.



"Hazel" was contacted by a 'medical response team' that had purportedly arrived on scene of an accident in Denver and asked to notify family. The caller, the supposed ambulance driver, inquired if "Hazel" had relatives in Denver or Aurora, to which she replied she had an aunt and uncle in Aurora. "Hazel" was then informed her aunt had hit a gang member on a motorcycle, and because the gang member had a warrant out for his arrest, did not want the police notified. The "father" of the gang member then spoke with Hazel. He wanted money and wanted it now. He threatened that if she didn't cooperate, he would take kidnap her aunt. Hazel advised the "father" that she didn't believe him and was going to call the police, and hung up. She immediately contacted her aunt and uncle, who were and had been safe and sound at home, and not involved in an accident.

Here's what Hazel did correctly:

- She was suspicious enough that she hung up on the person.
- She told the person that she would call the police and did.
- She immediately called her aunt and uncle, to verify their whereabouts.
- She [called our office to report the incident](#) so that we could share this information.

The Grandparent Scam is very similar. You receive a call from your grandchild crying that he is being held in a Mexican jail awaiting bond because he was caught: using marijuana, was in an accident or caught in a smuggling ring -- you pick. Your grandchild's "lawyer" gets on the phone wanting YOU (and no one else but you) to wire money for bond. The red flags for both the Kidnapping and the Grandparent scams are very similar:

- The caller uses various techniques to instill a sense of **fear, panic, and urgency in an effort to rush the victim into making a very hasty decision.**
- Instructions usually require the ransom payment be made immediately and typically by wire transfer.
- You are told to TELL NO ONE otherwise, there will be ramifications.

There are many very smart and educated people who fall for these scams. After all, it's your relative that needs your help **NOW**. These scammers are very skilled in getting folks to react quickly and with their checkbooks.



Waiting for Your Next Move

Planning a move? Watch out -- Moving is prime time for identity theft because personal information is constantly shuffled from one home to the next leaving it accessible to dumpster divers, untrustworthy movers, nosy neighbors and sketchy

contractors. Here's how to protect yourself :

Before the Move

- Notify the post office at least seven to 10 business days before the move.
- Notify your bank, credit card companies, retirement fund managers, insurance companies (including Medicare), health care providers and utilities.
- Fill out the [IRS Change Request Form 8822](#). Scammers LOVE to happen upon tax returns in the mail.

- Expect a letter at your old address from the U.S. Postal Service, and possibly your credit card company, asking you to verify your move. (Scammers fraudulently file address change requests in your name to intercept your mail.)
- I've said it before, and I'll say it again... **Shred. Shred. Shred** (got it?) all of your sensitive documents. Moving often means getting rid of old paperwork. If tossed into the trash, you are giving dumpster divers good reading material.
- Be mindful of open houses. Sensitive documents – birth certificates, passports, wills, tax returns, financial statements, health insurance and medical records (along with jewelry and other valuables, of course) – should be removed from a home being shown, or at least kept in a locked cabinet.
- [Do your homework on moving companies](#). You're safest with those that are registered with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and have a USDOT number assigned by the U.S. Department of Transportation.
- Some have suggested that you scan your documents and email them to yourself. And then of course, you'll shred the original.

During the Move

Supervise everything. Your presence can deter sticky fingers. If you can't be there, designate a trusted person to be your eyes and ears.

Personally transport all your sensitive paperwork and jewelry. Put important papers and valuables into a locked box and take it with you. Move your computer yourself and then change your password.

New Home Sweet Home

Within 30 days of your move, verify that all mail is coming to the new residence.

Ensure that old utility, cable or other accounts have been closed.

Three months after the move, get a free copy of your credit report online at annualcreditreport.com to ensure that no fraudulent accounts have been opened in your name.



THINK YOU'VE BEEN SCAMMED?
If you suspect you've been scammed or exploited, call our
Fraud Hot Line to report it.
720-913-9179

SCHEDULE A SPEAKER

If you would like a Word document version of this newsletter, I'm happy to send along, just email with a request.

Interested in learning more about scams happening in Denver? Do you want to know how to protect yourself from identity theft? Maro Casparian is available for speaking engagements with faith-based organizations, neighborhood associations, PTAs, schools, rotary clubs, etc.



Maro Casparian

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Email amc@denverda.org to: Subscribe to this newsletter, schedule a presentation or to send suggestions for the next newsletter.

