

SAFETY MESSAGE FROM CHIEF of POLICE

From the Office of the Chief of Police:

The suggestion box on our website, (www.mvpdtx.org) was busy this week and we appreciate it. One question concerned being scammed. Very often we get reports from our residents of attempts to "be scammed" through a variety of methods. Scam artists, AKA crooks, use internet and email connections, regular mail, phone calls, and even in person visits.

It is common to receive emails now telling you that you have won a prize and just need to verify by contacting an address or making a phone call. Also very common are attempts to convince you that you can get lots of money by just helping someone in a foreign country transfer funds for you to hold for them. Many get calls like this by phone, too.

RULE NUMBER ONE:

ALWAYS assume that anyone who initiates contact with you is doing so to scam you. The best defense is to delete the email, hang up the phone, or throw the mailing in the trash, preferably after shredding. Legitimate companies have legitimate means to make contact with you without exposing you to risk of being scammed. For example, if you get a call from your bank directing you to do something, ask them to provide contact information so you can call them back to prove who they are.

There is no way of knowing for sure who is on the phone with you! Most of us cannot distinguish between valid and invalid email. It is easy to print fake stationary that looks real.

Senior citizens seem to be targeted more than most for several reasons. Most seniors will admit they are not very tech savvy. Many have never been subjected to crooked scammers and are not aware of the techniques they use. Scammers look for easy prey that has resources and assets. So...beware of the uninvited contact. Many people are victimized by clicking on internet websites that have clever ways to get you to click. They will offer some crazy picture, or exciting video, or unusual story. When you click on the site, it may ask you to download certain programs in order to read the original message. BEWARE! These sites can invade your computer or add programs you do not want that causes you to spend money to clean up. Remember the advice...if you are not 100% certain of the site, do not fall for the temptation to click. Also, be wary and suspicious of those tv ads selling some incredible product for \$19.95 and if you act today, you can get another one free.

Lately, we have had several residents who received contact from the IRS alerting them that someone filed a return using their name. Be very cautious when contacted by someone claiming to be with the IRS. The IRS rarely calls to make inquiries. However, we received several reports in October where the IRS notified some of our residents that someone had filed claims using their social security numbers. Again...make contact with the IRS or the police directly. Do not do business with anyone you cannot be sure of.

In review: the best defense to protect yourself from being scammed is hang up the phone, delete the email, do not open the door for someone you do not know or can verify their identity, shred and trash suspicious mailings, and do not click on unfamiliar internet websites.