



Fort Thomas Police Investigations

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In Fort Thomas, we enjoy a low crime rate and have a great working relationship with our community members. In an effort to keep the public informed of crime trends, we wanted to make our citizens aware of a popular and disturbing schemes to steal money from unsuspecting victims. Phone and internet scams are not new, but we have seen an increase in this type of activity within our city in the last year. Due to advances in technology, fraudsters are able to use “spoofed” phone numbers to call potential victims from untraceable numbers. Most of the time, the scammers are not in the immediate area. In fact, oftentimes the thieves are operating from locations in other countries. These factors make it very difficult for local police departments to effectively investigate and charge the individuals responsible. Here are examples of the scams that are most often reported to our department:

Internet “phishing” scams: Phishing takes place when scammers send fraudulent emails that are supposedly from reputable companies or entities in order to persuade the recipients to reveal sensitive information, such as credit card numbers or personally identifiable information. Emails may come in the form of unpaid invoices for an item you did not order, and often have misspelled words or elements of the email may seem “out of place”. If you doubt the validity of an email, do an internet search for the company’s contact number and call them directly.

Urgent care scam – This scheme recently gained attention in the media. Dozens of people around the region received calls from a fraudster who claimed they were trying to collect on an unpaid Urgent Care bill accrued by the victim’s family member. In many cases, the caller had personal information about the victim, including address, date of birth, social security number, and phone numbers. If the person receiving the call does not pay the caller and just hangs up, the fraudster then calls members of the victim’s family, claiming they would come to their home to collect the debt. We believe that the scammer gained the victim’s personal information through a “phishing” scam. A couple people who received these calls purchased gift cards and paid the scammers over the phone.

IRS scam – We receive reports of this scam every year. Scammers call victims and inform them that they owe back taxes. They claim that if they do not pay the scammer over the phone, local law enforcement will be dispatched to arrest them.

Local police department scam – From time to time, someone comes in and reports that an unknown number called them and identified themselves as the Fort Thomas Police Department. They inform the victim that they have accrued several hundred dollars in parking tickets. They threaten the victim with arrest if they do not pay the fee over the phone, usually with gift cards.

Grandchildren scam – This scam specifically targets the elderly within our community. A fraudster will call a grandmother or grandfather within our community and claim to be that person’s grandchild. They pretend to be incarcerated in a foreign country and state that unless grandma or grandpa pay their bail, usually by wiring money, they will remain there indefinitely.



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Sweepstakes/Lottery scam: We've had several residents report that they have received emails and calls claiming that the recipient has won a large sum of money, but in order to receive the money, they have to pay some sort of tax or processing fee. The bill can be anywhere from a few hundred or a few thousand dollars. The fraudster instructs the victim to wire the money to an address in another state to begin the process of acquiring the money.

These are a few examples of a wide array of scams that criminals employ to get important information or money from unsuspecting victims by telephone or email. There are a few simple steps our residents can take to protect themselves from being deceived.

First of all, if you receive a call from someone who is overly aggressive in trying to get you to pay the bill over the phone using one of the methods mentioned above, HANG UP. The majority of the time, it is apparent early on in the call that it is likely a scam. In the rare case that the phone call is from a reputable agency, they will call you back. Also, it gives you time to do some research on the organization or company that is supposedly trying to collect from you.

After hanging up, if you are unsure whether the caller is reputable or not, CALL THE POLICE. Our officers are familiar with these scams and can advise you whether they are legitimate calls or not. Legitimate agencies and companies do not collect debt by extorting people into paying them over the phone with gift cards. They also will not instruct you to wire money using services like Western Union. The Fort Thomas Police Department will not contact you by phone in order to collect on an unpaid fine or ticket.

If your bank account has been affected by fraud, you need to report the situation to your banking institution. They will usually instruct you to go ahead and make a report with your local police department. However, these scams are usually something that are difficult for local police departments to investigate. Because of our limited ability to assist in these circumstances, we have provided a list of resources below that may help you to recover from identity theft or a phone/internet scam.

Kentucky Attorney General Scam Alerts - To further educate yourself on these scams, you can visit the Kentucky Attorney General's Office website at <https://ag.ky.gov/shielding-seniors/scam-alerts>.

Tele-marketer "No-Call" list - You can add yourself to a "no-call" list for tele-marketers at nocall.ky.gov/default.aspx.

Internet Crime Center - The FBI has a dedicated team that investigates internet scams that cross jurisdictional boundaries. You can report internet scams at www.ic3.gov.

Reporting Identity Theft - The Federal Trade Commission helps victims of identity theft report and recover from fraud. Visit www.identitytheft.gov to make a report.



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In conclusion, if it sounds too good to be true, it is! Legitimate companies/institutions do not accept payment for fines or fees via gift card or money wires. Lastly, Law Enforcement agencies do not extort citizens into paying tickets or fines over the phone.

For general questions, the Fort Thomas Police can be reached by phone Monday-Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm at 859-441-6562. If you need an officer dispatched, call Campbell County Dispatch at 859-292-3622. If you are calling about an emergency, call 911.