

Mayor's Column
December 4, 2017

This incredibly joyous time of giving also becomes a time of taking as scammers seem to want to capitalize on the goodwill and gift giving of the season.

Police Chief Satriale has unfortunately dealt with the following schemes/behavior patterns in just the past few weeks.

Phone Scams

Callers identify themselves as IRS agents alerting you in very urgent tone that there is an active IRS warrant out for you and money must be wired to clear up the warrant. Bottom line, the IRS never reaches out by phone, so immediately hang up.

Con Edison is also warning local customers not to be duped by a scam that involves a caller notifying you of a delayed or delinquent Con Ed payment. To avoid having your utilities cut off, the caller instructs you to buy a pre-paid Green Dot debit card and often knows which stores in town sell them. The caller instructs you to put your "bill amount" on the card and then provide the number of the card to the caller. At the point of transfer of the card ID number, the money is gone forever. Some scammers are so sophisticated that they can even make a Con Edison number show up on your caller ID. Con Edison does not ever accept payment by Green Dot cards so this is a red flag from the onset.

In a particularly frightening and insidious phone scam, a caller will state that a relative, usually a grandchild, has been arrested and needs money to keep his record clean. The resident is directed to purchase debit cards to post bond, pay a fine and again relay the card identification number to the caller. They are quite sophisticated and share current information about family members via trolling the internet. As example, grandson Peter might have posted pictures of his holiday break in Cancun so the caller now has accurate names, dates and locations of your family member. Always confirm the situation with the alleged family member in need of help and don't fall for the often used line warning you not to call your child, just get the debit cards, as your grandson doesn't want his parents to know about his predicament.

If you receive any of these calls, please follow up with a real time call to our Police Department at 914-337-0500 so we can track and act in a time sensitive manner.

Door Scams

This scam is similar to one perpetrated last year where a “Con Ed” employee, complete with authentic looking ID, comes to your door and offers discounts or vouchers toward your utility bill. If you agree to the new “savings” plan, the scammer would pay the account balance with a fraudulent check and tell the customer the account was paid. The customer would then check the account’s status online or by phone, see a payment posted, and pay the scammer a percentage of the payment. When the dust settles, their check bounces; you’ve given cash to the imposter and your entire Con Ed balance is still due.

Package Thefts

Because of the holiday season and the volume of internet sales, package delivery is at an all-time high and with it package thefts. Cars often trail UPS trucks and remove parcels from a porch before the driver has even turned the corner.

If possible:

Ask for a tracking number. Most major shipping companies offer this service at no charge. This number allows you to track your package and notifies you when it will be delivered.

Request a “Signature Delivery Option”. This requires a signature when the packages are delivered and ensures they will not be left at the front door.

Request a specific drop off time and date when you will be home to accept packages.

Arrange to have your packages held at the shipping service so you can pick them up.

Ask the delivery service to leave your packages at a side or back door. An enclosed porch where packages are out of sight is also a good option.

Have your packages delivered to your workplace.

Have your packages delivered to the home of a relative or neighbor who will be there to accept them.

Ask a trustworthy neighbor to keep a watchful eye out for your packages. If they’re willing, ask them to safeguard your packages until you return home.

If you receive a package you didn’t order or not addressed to you, call our police department first before calling the carrier.

In a new twist on the delivery scam, criminals are using stolen credit cards and via identity theft ordering goods – usually high end purses and electronics – and having them delivered to totally random addresses. They are smart enough to have package tracking and hope they get to the package before you do. If not, they arrive in a UPS, USPS or Fed Ex uniform and ask to reclaim the package delivered “in error.” Again, as a complete red flag, the USPS, UPS and Fed Ex never send drivers back to retrieve packages delivered in error, so call our police desk immediately.

Bottom line, if anything seems remotely suspicious, do not hesitate to call the police desk. Their availability and response has already resulted in arrests.