



CITY OF PUNTA GORDA

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POLICE

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NEWS RELEASE

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Scam Warning Issued by Punta Gorda Police

The Punta Gorda Police Department is currently investigating a series of related phone scams. In these reported cases, the callers told their victims they were Charlotte County Sheriff's Deputies and were notifying the citizen they missed their required service on a local grand jury. The callers advised the victims they would be arrested because of this missed grand jury service unless a monetary fee was paid immediately. The scammer advised the victims to purchase \$5,450.00 worth of reloadable debit cards (such as Green Dot cards) at a local retail outlet and provide the card security numbers over the phone. Each card has a \$500.00 limit so eleven cards must be purchased by the victim to meet the demand. Victims were told that once the fine was verified, they should meet with the prosecutor to have their arrest warrant waived.

In each incident the scammer identified himself as Lieutenant Brad Ford or Lieutenant Brad Fisher. The caller ID showed a local phone number and specific instructions with local addresses were given as well, adding validity to the scheme.

These loadable cards are anonymous and untraceable. Once the scammer has the security code the monies can be removed or transferred with no trail for investigators to follow. This is one variation of numerous phone and internet scams that are currently being used. The public should be aware law enforcement will never call requesting any type of payment for a fine.

Here are some tips to avoid being a victim of a crime:

- Don't send money anywhere to anyone without fully investigating the person and the company.
- If you "have to act now," it's not worth it.
- Ask for brochures and other information about the company or nonprofit. A legitimate organization will provide such materials.
- Never provide your bank accounts, credit card numbers, Social Security number, Medicare number, date of birth, or other personal information to someone who calls you on the phone or requests the information over the internet.
- Don't open emails from someone you are not familiar with.

Captain Tom Lewis stated, "The police department is focused on educating our community to prevent these scams that many times are targeted at our elderly customers. We are asking that you call us immediately if you or someone you know is contacted by anyone you believe is trying to scam you."

If you are unsure of any situation, if you have been the victim of a scam or an attempted scam or if you have information about a scam, please call the Punta Gorda Police Department at (941)

Media Release

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639-4111.

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