

by Officer Cassandra Dabilis

Phone Scams

The trend among many of us learning to protect ourselves as we keep up to speed with today's technology is one of Identity Fraud. However we must also be wary of Telephone Scams. Many of us have had the experience of being bothered by telemarketing scams in the past. Telemarketing fraud is a multi-billion dollar business in the United States. According to the Federal Trade Commission, every year thousands of consumers lose as little as a few dollars to as much as their life savings to telephone con artists.

The Federal Trade Commission as well as your local police department encourages all to be aware and skeptical when hearing a phone solicitation. Unlike most crimes telemarketing (or phone) scams in general, all require one important element to be successful, and that is **YOUR PARTICIPATION AND COOPERATION**.

It is important to know that we are all targets in phone scams. Telephone and telemarketing scams are not limited by race, ethnic background, education, age or gender. In saying this, elderly people tend to be targeted more often than not so it is vital that we spread our education and knowledge.

Telemarketers can contact the public via telephone, direct mail and print advertisements. Many of us wonder how our telephone numbers are even obtained when we receive these fraudulent calls. The list is often referred to as a, "sucker list." According to the Federal Trade Commission the "sucker lists" contain information about people who have at one time responded to previous solicitations. These lists can obtain a person's telephone number, address and even how much money they have spent.

So, how do we get our names off this list and protect ourselves? The National Do Not Call Registry! You can limit the number of telephone calls you received by placing your telephone number of this registry. Here's how!

1. Register your phone at WWW.DONOTCALL.GOV
2. Simply call 1-888-382-1222.

Placing your number on this registry will stop most calls, but not all.

Lastly if you should receive a call from a local organization asking for donations such as an animal shelter, police department, or fire department it is important to know you have options. You are in control! Ask the individual for their name, title, and telephone number. Then you can contact the agency directly and inquire about the donation drive being legit.

Remember to always air on the side of caution when it comes to your personal information. Changing online passwords on accounts frequently and protecting credit cards with additional fraud protection can save you in the long run.