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CITY OF MUSCATINE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Public Safety Building, 312 E. 5th Street, Muscatine, Iowa | (563-263-9222) | FAX (563-263-9340)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information contact:
Kevin Jenison, Communication Manager
Phone: (563) 264-1550
Fax: (563) 264-0750
E-Mail: kjenison@muscatineiowa.gov

THE GRANDPARENTS SCAM AND WAYS TO DEFEAT IT

Double check on relatives before sending cash

MUSCATINE, Iowa – The Muscatine Police Department continues to receive calls concerning a scam that targets older citizens and usually involves a request for money. A recent intended target became suspicious of the caller and started asking personal questions to identify the caller.

The calls target individuals over age 65 either by phone or email posing as either a relative in distress or someone claiming to represent the relative (lawyer, law enforcement agent, etc.). The message begins with “Hi grandma” or “Hi grandpa” with the con artist then explaining that they are in trouble and in need of money.

A CBS News investigative report in 2014 talked with an individual who was convicted for the Grandparent Scam. The conman said that people over 65 are targeted because they are more gullible, they are at home and more accessible. Once you have an individual emotional involved, he said, they will do anything for you. (Click [HERE](#) for the story)



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The growth of social media has led to an increase in this type of scam. Con artist do their homework before making the call or sending an email, searching social media profiles and checking other online sources to learn grandchildren's names and, sometimes, even their travel plans according to a blog post at pindrop.com. Scammers use scare tactics to intimidate individuals by implying their grandchildren are in physical danger or in trouble, and then ask the target to send money via a wire transfer (easily retrievable with a reference number and a phony identification).

The National Consumers League (NCL) Fraud Center recommends the following tips to detect and avoid the Grandparent Scam (http://www.fraud.org/grandparent_scams):

- Beware of any urgent solicitation of funds, especially if it is needed to pay for unexpected bills, such as bail money, lawyer's fees, or doctor bills.
- Before sending funds, independently contact the relative (or parent of the relative) the scam artist is claiming to be (or represent) at a known phone number to verify the details of the story.
- Scam artist's payment method of choice is the wire transfer. Any urgent request to wire money should be treated suspiciously.
- Be aware that fraudsters attempting the Grandparent Scam may call late at night to confuse potential victims.
- Consumer who have been victims of this scam should immediately report it to local law enforcement, their state attorney general, and the NCL's Fraud Center at Fraud.org.

According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) in their 2016 story of how to beat the grandparent scam (click [HERE](#) to read the story), the lesson to be learned is "if you ever get a call from or about a grandchild or any other relative in danger or trouble, and the immediate request is for cash, you need to pause, calm yourself, say you will have to consult



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another family member first, and hang up. Then check. If the emergency is by any chance real, you can still respond appropriately. If it's not—and the odds point to that—congratulate yourself. You just avoided being on next year's FTC list of those victimized by impostors.”

In the most recent case in Muscatine, the grandparent did just that ... they asked questions only the grandchild would know and the scammer quickly hung up.