

**FROM THE OFFICE OF
LORAIN COUNTY PROSECUTOR
DENNIS P. WILL**



A MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR WILL

FRAUD ALERT

Protect Yourself From The “Grandparent” Phone Scam:

In 2017, the Federal Trade Commission received almost 350,000 “imposter” fraud complaints from consumers. Seniors in Lorain County should remain vigilant against a common version of this scam which is often referred to as the “grandparent” phone scam.

How the Scam Works:

To commit this crime, fraudsters call a grandparent pretending to be a grandchild in distress. The supposed grandchild claims that they have been involved in some type of trouble, such as being arrested or being involved in a car accident, and then asks the grandparent to quickly wire them money through Western Union or MoneyGram for bail money, lawyer’s fees, hospital bills, or other fictitious expenses. In some cases, the fraudsters don’t know the name of the grandchild and actually rely on the grandparent to provide them with that information through their responses to the caller’s statements and questions. However, often the fraudsters have already checked social media profiles and other online sources before calling to learn the grandchild’s name, address, travel plans, and other identifying information. The fraudsters then use these details gained from the internet to manipulate the grandparent into believing that the caller really is the grandchild or an individual calling on the grandchild’s behalf such as a lawyer or police officer.

How to Protect Yourself:

Above all, beware of any urgent request to transfer or wire money coming from a caller. Fraudsters will deliberately attempt to rush you into making a hasty decision by claiming that the situation requires immediate action on your part. Be especially cautious if you receive the alleged urgent call late at night. Fraudsters often call late at night in order to disorient potential victims by waking them up and to discourage those potential victims from contacting other trusted relatives out of fear of disturbing their relatives during the night. If you receive an allegedly urgent phone call asking you to transfer or wire money, follow these steps to protect yourself:

1. First, resist the natural urge to panic. Don’t act out of a sense of urgency. No matter how urgent the caller claims the situation is, do not let yourself be rushed into transferring any money to the supposed grandchild.
2. Inform the caller that you will have to consult with another family member before transferring any money and then promptly hang up the phone.
3. After getting off the phone, contact a trusted family member to inform them about the call and to ask for their help analyzing the situation. Importantly, do this even if the caller asked you to keep the request to transfer money a secret.
4. Refrain from transferring any money to the supposed grandchild until you independently verify the identity and whereabouts of the grandchild who the caller claims is in danger or trouble. To do this, call your grandchild directly on a phone number that you know to be genuine and also call the parent of the grandchild to verify the grandchild’s whereabouts and the details of the story.
5. If you are the victim of a “grandparent” scam contact your local law enforcement.

“Virtual Kidnapping” - Beware of this Variation of the “Grandparent” Phone

Scam:

The FBI is advising that a variation of the “grandparent” phone scam called the “virtual kidnapping” scam has been being perpetrated by fraudsters for years is currently increasing in frequency. To commit this crime, fraudsters call a parent or grandparent and claim that they have abducted their child or grandchild and that the child or grandchild will be killed unless they quickly wire a ransom amount to Mexico. Fraudsters engaged in this scheme are becoming more sophisticated by using social media profiles and other online sources to learn information that will help them manipulate the victim into believing that they truly have abducted their relative. Fraudsters engaged in this scheme attempt to prevent the parent or grandparent from hanging up and contacting the alleged kidnap victim. Unlike traditional kidnappings, these fraudsters have not actually kidnapped anyone but instead rely on speed and fear to extract a ransom payment.

The FBI advises that if you receive a phone call from someone demanding a ransom of a relative, the following should be considered:

1. In most cases, the best course of action is to hang up the phone.
2. You should attempt to contact the alleged victim via phone, text, or social media and request that they call you back from their cell phone.
3. If you do engage the caller, refrain from disclosing your loved one’s name or providing any identifying information.
4. Request to speak to the alleged kidnap victim directly and ask questions only the alleged kidnap victim would know.
5. Try to slow the situation down. To buy time, repeat the caller’s request and tell them you are writing down the demand, or tell the caller you need more time.
6. Contact other family members to determine if they have been called as well.
7. Do not agree to pay a ransom, by wire or in person.
8. Contact your nearest your local law enforcement immediately.



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Arrive Alive

Each year, St. Patrick's Day is one of the deadliest holidays for drunk driving related crashes. Eighty percent of all drunk driving deaths on St. Patrick's Day involve drivers whose blood alcohol concentration is over twice the legal limit. This year the Lorain County Prosecutor's Office launched a new anti-drunk driving safe ride service called **Arrive Alive** in an effort to combat drunk and impaired driving over the St. Patrick's Day holiday weekend.

Between noon on Saturday, March 16th, 2019, and 3 a.m. on Monday, March 18th, 2019, the Lorain County Prosecutor's Office offered a safe ride service where it provided residents of Lorain County free rides home within the county. Residents were able to call 800-461-9357 and receive a free cab ride home from Safe and Reliable if they mentioned **ARRIVE ALIVE** or **Lorain Co. Prosecutors** or to download the LYFT ridesharing application on their smart phones and use the code **LCPOUT** to receive a free ride home. Our office hoped that providing this safe ride service over the St. Patrick's Day weekend would help keep drunk and impaired drivers off our county's roads.

The Lorain County Prosecutor's Office is excited to announce that the **Arrive Alive** safe ride service was a resounding success! We are excited to announce that over the recent St. Patrick's Day holiday weekend residents of Lorain County received over two hundred free rides home within the county through the Lorain County Prosecutor's Office's **Arrive Alive** program.

Stay safe,



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