



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Middlesex Sheriff's Office

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Middlesex Sheriff's Office Warns of Arrest Scam

The Middlesex Sheriff's Office is once again warning residents about ongoing telephone scams in which perpetrators are falsely posing as deputies and threatening arrest for failure to pay debts or fines.

"Recently, a Merrimack Valley resident notified our Civil Process Division he had received a call from an individual claiming to be a Middlesex Sheriff's Office Deputy. The caller threatened to arrest the victim and demanded money for a loan the victim had allegedly defaulted on," said Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian. "Utilizing this frightening scheme, the perpetrator was successful in scamming the victim out of money."

Adding to the realism of the scam call, the perpetrator was able to spoof a legitimate Middlesex Sheriff's Office telephone number, making it appear as though the call was actually coming from the Sheriff's Office. The perpetrator provided the victim with a second, unrelated number to call to make the payment.

This year, the Middlesex Sheriff's Office has seen an increase in the number of calls reported in which scammers are alleging to be deputies. In all the cases, the callers threaten to arrest the victim unless an immediate payment is made for an outstanding loan, a fine for failure to pay taxes or failure to show up for jury duty. The perpetrators will then demand the victim make a wire transfer, purchase a MoneyPak (or GreenDot) Card to settle the debt, or pay by credit/debit card. In some versions of these arrest scams, suspects will also ask for the victim's Social Security number, claiming it is as a way for them to verify they are speaking with the correct individual.

"We will never threaten arrest in such a manner," said Sheriff Koutoujian. "Our job is not to collect money, so we'll never call you to ask for a credit card number or demand you purchase a product to pay any outstanding fines or debts."

With an increase of these so-called arrest scams nationwide, the Middlesex Sheriff's Office is offering the following tips:

- Never give out your Social Security number to anyone who contacts you via phone or email;
- Never provide any financial information (bank account, credit card numbers);
- Never purchase a product (MoneyPak Cards, etc.) to pay a debt;

- If a caller phoning about financial issues identifies themselves as a member of law enforcement, get their name, hang up the phone, and call Information or look up the agency's main telephone number online (do not call the number the caller provides). Then call the main number, ask for that officer by name and remain on the line to speak with them. Always remember, however, a member of law enforcement will never demand money over the phone.
- Report any such calls you receive to local law enforcement.

Anyone who receives a call similar in nature to the one referenced above is encouraged to contact their local police department. We also ask that you contact the Middlesex Sheriff's Office Investigations Unit at 978-932-3220 if the caller indicates they work for the Middlesex Sheriff's Office.

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