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Middlesex Sheriff Peter Koutoujian visits Riverside Towers for scam awareness presentation

Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian visited Riverside Towers in Medford on January 29, where he spoke with residents about scam prevention awareness.

Approximately 30 residents attended the 45 minute presentation where Sheriff Koutoujian discussed a variety of ongoing scams and ways citizens can protect themselves.

Over the past year, more scams have been reported in which the perpetrators pose as government or public safety officials. In many of the scams reported to the Middlesex Sheriff's Office, individuals are receiving calls from people claiming to be IRS agents or deputy sheriffs and are being threatened with arrest unless they immediately pay a fictitious debt.

"No legitimate law enforcement agency will ever threaten arrest over the phone," said Sheriff Koutoujian. "Nor will they demand payment for debt over the phone."

One common theme in many of these so-called arrest scams is the demand that the supposed debt be paid by purchasing a MoneyPak or GreenDot card from a local store. The perpetrators will then have the victim load the card with a specific amount of money and have the victim read the numbers of the back of the card to them over the phone. The money is then debited from the card by the suspects.

"Receiving a call from someone claiming to be a member of law enforcement and demanding money can be a jarring experience. That is what these scammers are counting on," said Sheriff Koutoujian. "They are counting on people being so frightened that they pay immediately. But often, by just asking questions and calling the main line of your local law enforcement agency and speaking with an officer or deputy, residents can protect themselves and their hard-earned money."

Sheriff Koutoujian told attendees at the presentation, that should they receive a call from anyone claiming to be from the IRS or law enforcement demanding money, the best thing to do is to get a call back number, get off

the phone, look up the agency's main telephone number and call the main number, not the one provided by the caller. The Sheriff said when you call the main number you should remain on the line until you can confirm the legitimacy of the call or report it as a scam to police.

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