



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Middlesex Sheriff's Office

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Scammers Posing as Middlesex Sheriff Peter Koutoujian Tufts University students among those being targeted

MEDFORD – The Middlesex Sheriff's Office today has received more than 30 calls from individuals reporting having been contacted over the phone by men and women claiming to be with the Middlesex Sheriff's Office and threatening arrest for failure to pay federal taxes.

A number of those who reported the calls to the Middlesex Sheriff's Office said a male caller specifically identified himself as Middlesex Sheriff Peter Koutoujian. The Middlesex Sheriff's Office also determined that many of those who received scam calls yesterday were affiliated with Tufts University and immediately notified the university once that connection was made. The Tufts University Police Department encourages students or employees who receive such calls to let TUPD know as soon as possible.

"While we have been warning residents about these arrest scams for more than a year, this is by far the most calls we have ever received in one day," said Sheriff Koutoujian. "Today, these scammers have taken this one step further by not just posing as our officers -- but now me -- in an effort to con individuals out of their hard-earned money. I want to assure the public that no legitimate law enforcement official will ever threaten arrest or demand payment for debt over the phone."

One university student reported the caller told her she could either pay the debt or the criminal case against her would continue. The caller also allegedly told her if the debt was not paid, she would not be able to graduate.

In each case reported to the Middlesex Sheriff's Office, the scammers managed to spoof the office's main telephone number, making it appear as though the calls were legitimate. None of those who contacted the sheriff's office yesterday reported paying any money.

"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. "Fortunately, those who contacted us today had the presence of mind to ask good questions and recognize this as a scam."

Due to the nature of these scams, it is often impossible to trace phone calls or identify suspects. For that reason, the IRS, local police departments and sheriff's office across the country have tried to educate the public

about their prevalence and ways residents can protect themselves. Earlier this year, the Better Business Bureau rated arrest scams as the number one scam of 2014 (<http://goo.gl/RwCQUk>).

Individuals receiving similar calls, or who think they may have lost money, are encouraged to contact their local police department. Calls in which scammers identify themselves as members of the Middlesex Sheriff's Office can also report them to the Sheriff's Investigations Unit at 978-932-3220.

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