

[Attorney General urges residents to talk to their loved ones about common scams](#)

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

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SEATTLE – It starts with a desperate phone call, e-mail or even an instant message from someone posing as a grandchild or a friend. He was arrested overseas. She was mugged. Please send money right away. Except it’s not who you think – it’s a con artist. Washington residents are losing thousands of dollars to manipulative criminals claiming to be relatives in need of help. “You may have already heard the warnings and believe you’ll never become a victim, but have you talked to your family members, especially the seniors in your life?” Attorney General Rob McKenna asked. “You could save your loved ones from joining the growing list of victims who have lost money because of wire transfer scams.” Here’s how to identify two of the most proliferate scams making the rounds in Washington:[Page 1 : Attorney General urges residents to talk to their loved ones about common scams](#)

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[pagebreak:GRANDPARENT SCAM]

The “Grandparent Scam” usually starts with a phone call from a con posing as a grandchild in need of bail money. Other victims of the grandparent scam have reported receiving phone calls from scammers posing as police officers or attorneys. In every case, the con says money needs to be sent immediately by Western Union or Moneygram. A Tumwater couple recently lost \$2,800 after they received a call from someone they thought was their grandson. The con likely didn’t know their grandson’s name when he placed the call, which began: “Hi Grandma.” The victim in this case, who has several grandchildren, asked who was calling. “Guess,” said the caller. “Kyle?” said the well-meaning grandmother. “Yes, it’s Kyle,” came the reply. The pretend “Kyle” said that he and a friend had been vacationing in Spain. Customs agents arrested them at the airport after they found marijuana in his friend’s luggage. He begged his grandparents not to tell anyone. The grandfather took over from there. He thought to ask some questions to confirm the caller’s identity, but “Kyle” had an excuse for everything: He didn’t sound like himself because he had a cold. He was too distraught to remember the name of the family’s recently deceased dog. When asked for his middle name, he said customs agents wouldn’t allow him to provide it for security. When pressed, he wept, “Don’t you believe me?” A “customs agent” then joined the conversation and said Kyle was headed to court and would likely be found innocent, but that bail money was needed before he could leave. He told Kyle’s grandfather where to send the money and where to call with the confirmation number. “It seemed like they had an answer for everything,” said Kyle’s grandfather. After he sent the money, he had

doubts and called his daughter. The real Kyle was at home. The fake one called the next morning with another sob story about he had missed his plane and needed more money.

[pagebreak:EMERGENCY TRAVEL aka "I've BEEN ROBBED!" SCAM]

Another popular scam starts with distress message sent by e-mail or message sent over a social networking site. Scammers first hijack the account then send a plea to their entire contact lists. The messages say the person was mugged or robbed during a vacation and needs money to pay the hotel bill, book airfare or replace a passport. This scam actually includes two groups of victims: those that send money and those whose accounts were hacked. Remember to scan your computer periodically for viruses and malware. Use strong passwords and change them every so often.

[pagebreak:RED FLAGS] · You're asked to send money quickly and secretly.

· The call or message originates from overseas. However, you should be aware that technology allows scammers to bypass caller ID systems. · The person can't or won't answer questions that the only the real person would know. · Any time someone asks you to send money by Western Union or Moneygram, it's invariably a scam. You might also be asked to send a check or money order by overnight delivery. Con artists recommend these services so they can steal your money before you realize you've been cheated. Money transfers can be picked up at any service location as long as the thief/recipient has the confirmation number.

[pagebreak:TIPS] · Avoid volunteering information over the phone. Always ask callers to identify themselves by name and ask individuals who contact you to provide information that only you and people close to you would know. · Call the friend or relative claiming to need your help to confirm whether the story is true, using a phone number you know to be genuine. If you aren't able to contact the person, call other friends or family members to confirm the situation. · Refuse to send money via wire transfer. · If you have wired money and it hasn't been picked up yet, call the wire transfer service to cancel the transaction. Once the money has been picked up, there is no way to get it back. · Trust your gut.