



Public Information Release
December 19, 2011
Sergeant Steve Brooks, Public Information Officer

The Lake County Sheriff's Office has received a report of a fraud scheme, in which an elderly victim received a telephone call from a suspect, informing him of a relative who had supposedly been arrested outside of the country. The suspect asked the victim for money so the relative could be released from jail.

On Friday, December 16, 2011, an elderly Upper Lake man has reported receiving a telephone call from someone identifying himself as "Frank Griffin", who advised the victim that his nephew was currently incarcerated in Peru. Griffin requested that money be sent to him, so the victim's nephew could be released from jail and return home for the Christmas holiday. Unfortunately in this case, the victim did in fact wire several thousand dollars to a specified address. The money was wired on two occasions to a "Mary Blake" in Peru. Between each wire, the victim would be re-contacted by Griffin, who asked for the transfer confirmation number. Shortly after wiring the money, the victim learned that his nephew had not traveled to Peru and was home safe.

Fridays report appears to be very similar to a trend we experienced in early 2009 and again in March 2011, in which elderly victims were sending money to persons they thought were grandchildren in need.

In March of this year, an elderly Kelseyville woman reported getting a call from someone claiming to be her grandson. He claimed to have been arrested in Canada for DUI. The suspect talked the woman into wiring \$2,800.00 via Western Union to Madrid, Spain, so he could pay his fines. After returning home from wiring the \$2,800.00, the woman got another call from the suspect asking for another \$2,500.00 for attorney fees. The woman again wired money to Spain and after sending the \$2,500.00, she was called a third time asking for another \$2,000.00. This time the woman refused and later contacted her son and found out her grandson had been in Redding the whole time.

In another case, an elderly Upper Lake woman received a call that her grandson was being held in jail in Madrid, Spain. She was told she needed to wire \$2,000.00 to get her grandson out. Fortunately in this case, the woman called her daughter who lived out of state as she was leaving to wire the money. Her daughter called the Sheriff's Office who intervened before the \$2,000.00 was sent to the suspect.

These are some examples of cases reported to the Sheriff's Office. There is no telling how many others have gone unreported. The suspects in these cases usually have detailed information about the actual grandchild or family member who is supposedly in trouble. They are often able to convince the victims they are in fact their grandchild.

There isn't nearly as much advice on preventing fraud and scams as there are ways to be defrauded. However, aside from protecting one's personal information, members of the public are encouraged to always carefully scrutinize unsolicited request of any kind before acting on

them. Additionally, phone calls from supposed relatives or on the behalf of relatives asking for money should always be verified by contacting relatives, or the Lake County Sheriff's Office before sending any money.