



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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DON'T FALL FOR HOLIDAY SCAMS

In light of the rapidly approaching holidays, it is important for everyone to be prepared for an increase in scam calls. While there are many different types of scams, the Butte County District Attorney wants to remind everyone of ways to identify such scams and avoid becoming a victim. During the holidays, scammers use the increase in online sales to represent themselves as being from Amazon, Walmart, or other large retail or credit companies.

Scammers often have background information about the person receiving the call. This information is readily found on the internet and can include phone numbers, dates of birth, and addresses. Simply having this information does not make the caller legitimate. On the contrary, protected personal information is never provided over the phone from a legitimate company. You should never provide or confirm any information when receiving an unsolicited phone call.

The following are ways to help identify if the call is a scam:

- 1) Any unsolicited calls regarding a problem with an account or other problem.
Companies do not make phone calls to resolve problems, they send letters or emails with contact information for the customers to respond. Any unsolicited calls from companies should be considered a scam. If you do not recognize the number, do not answer and let the caller leave a message. Avoid having any conversations with unsolicited callers.
- 2) The problem requires immediate attention.
Scammers thrive on creating stress and use words like “urgent” or “immediate attention required” to prevent you from being able to think clearly. If the caller makes you feel rushed and/or stressed, it is most likely a scammer. No legitimate company uses stress to address a business issue.
- 3) Cash is required and it needs to be sent immediately.
Large companies have financial departments that send notices of billing problems. They do not make unsolicited calls to the customer. Any unsolicited phone call that requires the transfer of money is a scam.
- 4) Caller asks for pre-paid credit cards to cover the problem.
Pre-paid credit cards are difficult to trace and do not require a name to be used. Most often scammers simply ask for the numbers on the cards, which can then be used to take the money off the cards without ever being in possession of the actual card. No legitimate business operates in this way. If someone asks for money, especially in the form of a pre-paid credit card, it is a scam.

5) Becoming hostile.

If you do not do what scammers want, they become aggressive and hostile. The more you prevent scammers from taking your money, the more they will verbally assault you. In many cases the scammers will claim legal action if you fail to do what they say. Do not fall for this tactic.

In the event you feel you are being scammed, tell them you want to research the issue and will contact the company directly; that you do not handle business over the phone. Ask for the caller's name, their supervisor, the name of the company and a call back number. Do not provide any personal or account information. Most likely the caller will become more aggressive and try to use scare tactics involving threats of jail or civil action. This is all part of their script. Do not give any information. If needed, hang up and notify your local law enforcement agency.

EMAILS

If you receive an unsolicited email, even if it looks as though it is from a legitimate company, DO NOT CLICK ON ANY PROVIDED LINK! A legitimate notice will provide directions for you to contact the company through secondary channels, never through a link in an unsolicited notice. If you have a question about authenticity, use contact information from the involved company website, or any correspondence you have previously received, not solely from the information provided on the email.

It is important to remember, legitimate notices do not require much on your part, the more the notice requires of you, the more the likelihood it is a scam.

If further assistance or information is needed, the Butte County District Attorney Fraud Unit can be reached at dafraud@buttecounty.net, or 1-866-DAFRAUD.