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News Release

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KPD warns public of rising number of scams targeting kūpuna

KEKAHA – Today, Kaua'i police visited the Kekaha and Waimea senior centers warning the public that there is a rising number of scams targeting kūpuna. More specifically, scammers are frequently posing as law enforcement agents. They tell victims that they've been linked to a crime through their social security number.

The victims are told that in order to avoid prosecution, they must send money and/or gift cards to the scammers. Victims have been known to send large amounts of cash to various addresses throughout the United States, sometimes in incremental sums. Scammers can also request payment via wire transfer through the victim's bank.

"This is particularly heartbreaking because our kūpuna are often vulnerable to these crimes," said Investigative Services Bureau Assistant Chief Bryson Ponce. "If you have an elderly loved one, please check in on them and make sure that they are aware of these scams and that they don't provide any kind of private information to unknown sources."

Aside from posing as law enforcement, scammers are also impersonating companies like Amazon and vehicle warranty service representatives.

Scammers are also known to use a wide variety of tactics to get victims to call them. Email phishing, USPS mail, text messages, social media, and voicemails are some of the most common ways to trick victims into calling scammers.

Police are also warning the community to be vigilant about making online purchases. There have been several cases where victims are scammed into purchasing vehicles and/or pets. The victims are asked to send money via wire transfer and after the funds are sent, communication from the scammer ceases to exist.

Last year, county of Kaua'i residents reported more than 28 cases of scamming, amounting to roughly \$327,000 in losses. This year, losses have already reached \$149,000.

"Many scams originate from a foreign country," said AC Ponce. "And the trouble is that once the money leaves the United States, there is little possibility of recovering it or prosecuting the scammers. Scammers also use internet-based programs in order to disguise their phone numbers which makes tracing them nearly impossible."

The following are some tips to prevent being a victim of a scam:

- Do not answer calls, emails, or texts from numbers you do not recognize.
- Vet the company and do an independent search for the specific company's phone number to call them back and speak with a representative.
- Law enforcement will never call you and ask for money in lieu of being arrested.
- Be aware of payment methods. No legitimate company will ask for payments via reading gift cards numbers off of the back of the card.
- Never give out personal information.

If you suspect a scam, please call KPD at 241-1711 or visit kauai.gov/police and file an official police report. For additional resources, please visit the state Attorney General's website at

ag.hawaii.gov.



Assistant Chief Bryson Ponce, Detective Mike Nii, and Kekaha Seniors

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