



VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF MEDIA RELEASE



GEOFF DEAN, SHERIFF

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February 25, 2014 UPDATED INFORMATION - Jury Service Telephone Scam

The residents of Ventura County have recently been targeted by a scam in which a telephone caller represents themselves as a member of the Ventura County Sheriff's Office. The scam attempts to persuade the victim to provide payment information over the telephone for failing to report for jury duty.

Over the past week, several residents in Ventura County have received calls from an individual identifying themselves as a sworn member of the Ventura County Sheriff's Office. The caller claims the victim has a warrant issued for their arrest; however, they have the option to pay the fine over the phone by providing credit card information. Victims are caught off guard, and shocked at the prospect of having a warrant issued for their arrest. The scam preys upon the victim's unquestioning acceptance of authority and willingness to cooperate with law enforcement. In some cases, the victims have returned calls in response to messages left on their answering machines and heard a recorded message leading them to believe they had reached the Sheriff's Office. During calls, the suspect has also disclosed personal information about the victim, such as the victim's address, to further legitimize their identity.

This "jury service scam" has been circulating around the United States since 2005, occurring in states from Maryland to California. The suspects utilize internet programs known as "Voice Over Internet Protocol", or "VoIP" to facilitate the scam. Utilizing these programs, suspects can change their voice and mimic a local area code telephone number in order to provide a sense of legitimacy to the call. This technique allows for calls to originate from foreign countries.

Residents are reminded that Sheriff's employees NEVER request financial or payment information over the telephone for any reason. If the public receives calls regarding jury service, they should contact the Ventura County Superior Court Jury Services Division directly at (805) 654-2256.

The Ventura County Sheriff's Office Major Crimes Unit has begun an investigation into the reported incidents.

Ventura County Crime Stoppers will pay up to \$1,000 reward for information, which leads to the arrest and criminal complaint against the person(s) responsible for this crime. The caller may remain anonymous. The call is not recorded. Call Crime Stoppers at 800-222-TIPS (8477).