POLICE DEPARTMEN
"AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCREDITED AGENCY"

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Is it a scam?

The Heath Police Department has received several complaints of fraud involving gift cards. Below are a few tips for determining if the caller is legitimate or fraudulent and what to do when you receive a phone call or e-mail asking you to pay with a gift card.

Must Pay with Gift Cards (IRS and iTunes)

HOW THE SCAM WORKS: A customer receives a threatening voice message from a scammer pretending to be from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. The victim is told that they can avoid being arrested for tax evasion if he/she pay the fine with iTunes gift cards or other gift cards. In a similar example, a "State Trooper" calls to say that the victim failed to show up for jury duty and there is warrant out for his/her arrest. To avoid going to jail, "bail" can be paid using "MoneyPak" as a bond until the case is cleared. Once gift cards are purchased, the scammer will ask the victim to repeat the gift card numbers over the phone–at which time, the scammer drains the value of the gift cards. Victims who fall for the initial ploy are often told to go back to the store to buy additional gift cards.

On the surface, this scam seems really easy to spot and hard to believe, but given that Americans have been swindled out of nearly $40 million from it, there is obviously more to the story. According to this article on the IRS iTunes gift cards scam, "scammers posed as U.S. Internal Revenue Service officials and left victims voicemails accusing them of tax evasion and threatening them with arrest." The article goes on to say that the callers were highly trained and very convincing.

RED FLAG:

No reputable company, the IRS, or any government agency will ever demand payment via gift cards.

WHAT TO DO: If you get a phone call from someone telling you to make a payment with gift cards, hang up the phone. If you get an email from a company telling you to make a payment with gift cards, delete it. Call the police. Don't be fooled.

- If you have any doubts that the call or email is legitimate, contact the company yourself.
- Don't call the number given to you on the voice message or email.
- Don't respond to the email or click any of the links inside of it.
- Initiate the call yourself with numbers you can confirm from a current bill or an appropriate web site.

Quick Tips!

1. Hang Up on Fake Callers
No reputable company nor government agency (including the IRS) will ever demand payment with gift cards. If someone claims to be from the IRS, hang up. (There are fraudulent email scams.)

2. Balance Check in Private
If someone asks to listen as you call to confirm the balance of a gift card, it is a scam.

Whenever you buy a gift card, save the purchase and activation receipt until the gift card is redeemed. Do not share that information over the phone.

Be Safe,

Chief Dave Haren