

Beat: News

## U.S. Marshals, FBI Urge Public to Report Phone Scams

### Spoofers using government phone numbers

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**USPA NEWS** - The U.S. Marshals and the FBI are alerting the public of several nationwide imposter scams involving individuals claiming to be U.S. marshals, court officers, or other law enforcement officials.

They are urging people to report the calls their Local FBI office and file a consumer complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, which has the ability to detect patterns of fraud from the information collected and share that data with law enforcement. During the latest series of calls, scammers identifying themselves as "Deputy John Garrison" (the name of the actual U.S. Marshal in the Eastern District of Texas) attempt to collect a fine in lieu of arrest due to a claim of identity theft, failing to report for jury duty, or other offenses. They then tell victims they can avoid arrest by withdrawing cash and transferring it to the government, purchasing a prepaid debit card such as a Green Dot card or gift card and read the card number over the phone to satisfy the fine, or by depositing cash into bitcoin ATMs. Scammers use many tactics to sound and appear credible. In many instances, scammers provide information like badge numbers, names of actual law enforcement officials and federal judges, along with courthouse addresses. They may also spoof their phone numbers to appear on caller IDs as if they are calling from a government agency or the court when they actually are not.

If you believe you were a victim of such a scam, you are encouraged to report the incident to your local FBI office and to the FTC. Additionally, The Department of Justice launched the National Elder Fraud Hotline, which provides services to seniors who may be victims of financial fraud. Case managers assist callers with reporting the suspected fraud to relevant agencies and by providing resources and referrals to other appropriate services as needed. The hotline's toll-free number is 833-FRAUD-11 (833-372-8311).

Things to remember:

- U.S. MARSHALS WILL NEVER ask for credit/debit card/gift card numbers, wire transfers, or bank routing numbers, or to make bitcoin deposits for any purpose.
- NEVER divulge personal or financial information to unknown callers.
- Report scam phone calls to your local FBI office and to the FTC.
- You can remain anonymous when you report.
- Authenticate the call by calling the clerk of the court's office of the U.S. District Court in your area and verify the court order given by the caller.

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Wendy writes for the United States Press Agency and is a former columnist with the Fulton County Expositor, Wauseon, Ohio.

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