



Consumer Advisory

From the Office of Rice County Attorney
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“Tech” Age Scams: Old Ploys – New Scares

Scams of all kinds are on the increase, particularly pitches that come over cell phones, through text messages, fax machines and personal emails. Consumers across the state and U.S. are being bombarded with bogus winnings, offers of non-existent or malicious services, and scare tactics that are designed to steal personal and financial information. Unsuspecting victims who respond to these ads not only put themselves at considerable risk of identity theft; they are opening themselves up to other scams that may cause other problems. There are virtually thousands of scams in circulation at any given time. The most effective mode of prevention is to **just delete or hang up!** The following are some of the more common ploys making the rounds:

Computer problem scam - A person purporting to be from Microsoft calls and claims that your home computer is at risk of a serious security threat, but assures you the “problem” can be corrected over the phone. The caller then instructs you to perform certain computer functions, and by doing so, tricks you into giving him/her remote access to your computer. The fraudster then installs malware to steal your personal information or enroll you in an expensive, but worthless, maintenance or warranty program.

Missed jury duty scam - You receive a phone call, text or email message from an alleged court official who charges that you failed to show for jury duty. The problem is; you never received a summons to appear. To avoid legal consequences, you must clear your record by giving your Social Security number and other personal information. Names of legitimate-sounding businesses are also used to perpetrate similar schemes.

Spoofing, smishing and phishing scams – You are asked to take a voter survey; which in turn qualifies you for a free vacation or a cruise. But first you must leave a credit or debit card number to cover the travel fees. Or, you receive a gift card offer from a retailer such as Target. To cash in on the offer, you must first leave personal information. When these scams happen over the phone, they are referred to as “*spoofing*” scams. When received as a text message, they are called “*smishing*” scams; and if they come over email, they are referred to as “*phishing*” scams”.

Just delete or hang up! Legitimate businesses don’t notify their customers of problems over email, through texts, or over the phone!

Need help or have a question?
Rice County Attorney’s Office 507-332-5934

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