

Pinellas County Sheriff's detectives sent out a media release March 17 encouraging the public to be on alert to a recent phone scam occurring in Pinellas County.

Detectives were first notified of the scam on March 4.

The suspect is calling residents in Pinellas County posing as a sheriff's office lieutenant, Lt. Wade Harris.

According to detectives, "We have been alerted to two incidents in which citizens of Pinellas County have been targeted by the phone scam," detectives said. "He tells victims he is a lieutenant with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office and they have an outstanding warrant for missing jury duty."

Detectives said the caller then explains that if they don't pay the fines they will be arrested at their residence. They are told they can turn themselves in at the sheriff's office, or they can pay the fine and the warrant will no longer be active.

He tells them to go to the nearest convenience store and purchase gift cards in increments of \$500. They are supposed to call him back with the reference numbers located on the back of the card.

Detectives said that the suspect making the phone calls is male. He has used a police scanner as background noise, and types loudly on a keyboard while talking to the victims.

The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office will never call citizens requesting money over the telephone. Detectives advise citizens to not give personal information or account information over the phone unless you are initiating the phone call.

If anyone has information on this scam or has become a victim they are asked to call Sgt. Frank Holloway with the Economic Crimes Unit at 727-582-6200.

Best regards,
Deputy Charles Skipper
Crime Prevention Unit Pinellas County Sheriff's Office
10750 Ulmerton Rd. Largo, Fl. 33778
Work: (727) 582-5661