Seniors vs. Crime
New Extortion Scam Sweeping The Nation

It's not new, but it is one of the most widespread Internet extortion scams seen in recent years. It is usually based on a claim your PC has been hacked, and is currently sweeping North America and parts of Europe. Seniors vs. Crime has seen several of these scams in our offices in The Villages.

It works most effectively on people who have previously visited "adult" sites or other unsavory corners of the web, or who have taken compromising photos of themselves with their webcam. But sometimes even those who haven't done this get caught up in the scam out of sheer fear.

The crooks send an email to random potential victims claiming they hacked the recipients' computers and recorded their Internet activities. Not only that, but they activated the victims' webcam and recorded them during their activities -- and they threaten to release the video and screen-grabs to all the victims' contacts.

Finally, just to make their threat seem all the more convincing, the message includes details of recipients' passwords followed by a demand for a blackmail payment in Bitcoin, an untraceable cyber-currency. The demand is usually in excess of $1,000, payable within 24 hours -- and people have been paying up like crazy.

Of course, if you receive this kind of message, all of these claims could, in theory, be true. But unless you have been behaving inappropriately and you don't have up-to-date security software on your PC, it's almost certainly a scam that you can ignore.

Knowing your password(s) means little or nothing in this case. Mostly, they've been bought from dealers on the dark web and often they're old ones. And if they are, that's another way of identifying this as a scam. But the disclosure does underline the importance of using different passwords for different sites and regularly changing them.

Even if you do have something you'd rather others didn't know about -- perhaps you were just innocently nosing around the Internet or tricked into visiting a particular site -- it would be foolish to pay the crooks. Blackmailers always return for more. Instead, you should contact the police.

As an extra precaution, always switch off and (if possible) disconnect your webcam when you're not using it -- and keep your security software updated.

The extortion scam is a good demonstration of how crooks are always dreaming up new ways to employ established scams.
If you need assistance with understanding any aspects of Extortion Scams, contact your nearest Seniors Vs Crime office in The Villages for advice or assistance. Seniors vs. Crime can be reached at:

The Fruitland Park Police Department Annex in the Moyer Recreation Center in The Villages – (352) 674-1882

The Marion County Sheriff’s Office in The Villages – (352) 753-7775

The Sumter County Sheriff’s Office in The Villages – (352) 689-4600, Extension 4606

The Wildwood Police Department Annex at Brownwood in The Villages – (352) 750-1914

Volunteers at all four offices are ready, willing and able to assist you. To keep up with the latest scams, LIKE ‘Seniors vs. Crime Region 4’ on Facebook. Hablamos Español. Por favor pregunte por Yolanda. Martes a Viernes: 10:00 A.M. a 2:00 P.M., (352) 689-4606.