Seniors vs. Crime
Fake Family Emergency Scams

At Seniors vs. Crime, we get reports of calls, emails and texts like these almost every day of the week. It's one of the older scams around, but it is still making money for the scammers!

Scammers try to trick you into thinking a loved one is in trouble. They call, text, email, or send messages on social media about a supposed emergency with a family member or friend. They ask you to send money immediately. To make their story seem real, they may claim to be an authority figure, like a lawyer or police officer; they may have or guess at facts about your loved one.

These imposters may insist that you keep quiet about their demand for money to keep you from checking out their story and identifying them as imposters. But no matter how real or urgent this seems — it's a scam.

If you get a call or message like this, what can and should you do?

Carol Kando, an Attorney with the Division of Consumer and Business Education of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), advises that you should:

- Check it out before you act. Look up that friend or family member's phone number yourself. Call them or another family member to see what's happening, even if the person who contacted you told you not to.

- Don't pay. Don't wire money, send a check, overnight a money order, or pay with a gift card or cash reload card. Anyone who demands payment in these ways is always, always, always a scammer. These payment methods are like giving cash — and are nearly untraceable, unless you act almost immediately.

- If you sent money to a family emergency scammer, contact the company you used to send the money (wire transfer service, bank, gift card company, or cash reload card company) and tell them it was a fraudulent transaction. Ask to have the transaction reversed, if possible.

- Report the message or call at FTC.gov/complaint.

- Share this article to help other residents and their families avoid family imposter scams.

If you need assistance with understanding any aspects of Fake Check 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.
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“I lost my wallet and ID. I’m stranded — please wire money.”

“Your grandson is being held in jail. He needs bail money right away.”