The tech support scam has been around for a long time, but it is still claiming victims.

What do you mean?
A Lake County resident reported to Seniors vs. Crime that he had been scammed by someone offering technical support for his home computer. The resident had received a call from a company that identified itself as Think Wiz LLC from Spokane, Washington. Caller ID showed the phone number as 595-369-4618. This is a phony number; there is no 595 area code in Washington state.

The resident gave the caller access to his computer so the technician could upgrade the system. For that service, the Lake County resident paid the individual $830 by check.

That amount of money alone sounds like a swindle. Did it stop there?
No. Later in the week, the resident was contacted by his bank security rep and told that some $62,000 had been taken out of his accounts. Presumably, the scammer gained access to the resident’s financial information while rooting around in his computer.

What can you do to avoid similar tech support scams?
Here are some suggestions from the Federal Trade Commission:

» Don’t give control of your computer to someone who says they need to activate software. Instead, look carefully at the software instructions to learn how to activate the software yourself.

» Don’t give control of your computer to someone who calls you out of the blue claiming to be from tech support. Instead, hang up and call the company at a number you know to be correct.

» Never provide your credit card information, financial information or passwords to someone who claims to be from tech support.

» Learn how to protect your computer from malware.

Anything else?
If someone calls and says they have noticed your computer is slow or has a virus, it is a scam. Hang up immediately! Better yet, don’t answer the phone if you don’t recognize the caller.