Demanding Gift Card Payments Means A Likely Scams

TALKING ABOUT

Seniors vs. Crime

If Demanding Gift Card Payment, it’s Likely a Scam

A lot of people are reporting that they have been asked to pay using a gift card — by someone claiming to be from the IRS, a tech support scammer or someone “in need.” Just like if you are asked to wire money, think twice before you pay by gift card.

How does this scam work?
A scammer will claim the victim needs to pay for something — to settle a debt with the IRS, to remove a virus from a computer, to save a family member in a supposed crisis or similar scenario — by using a gift card.

It is usually made to seem like an emergency to both get the victim to panic and to justify the need for the gift card. The scammer will ask for the gift card number and the PIN, and then the money will be gone.

These cards are similar to cash and are virtually untraceable unless the victim acts immediately.

How do I protect myself?
The Federal Trade Commission advises that if someone asks for payment by gift card, it is almost always a scam.

Never buy gift cards for anyone demanding payment. Gift cards are for gifts, and any legitimate debt, retail transaction or bill should be able to be paid with other forms of payment.

What if I’m a victim?
If you’ve bought a gift card and lost money to someone who might be a scammer, report it to the company who issued the card. The contact information could be on the card, or you might have to look for the company online.

If you act quickly enough, they might be able to get your money back. Either way, it is important the company knows about it.

Always report all scams and fraud to your local law enforcement agency’s non-emergency number. If you believe someone is in danger, call 911.

Report all scams and financial abuse to the state attorney general, and file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at ftc.gov/complaint.