

October 6, 2008
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fairmont Police Department
(507) 238-4481

Fairmont Police Department cautions area residents to be cautious of telephone scams from Canada

Fairmont, Minn. The Fairmont Police Department is advising area residents to be cautious of “emergency” calls alleging to be from family members asking for money to be wire transferred to Canada.

In the last several weeks reports to Fairmont Police Department began regarding one of the latest frauds to get money from unsuspecting residents. While the details of the scam can vary, this latest financial scam involves scam artists who pretend to be a family member supposedly involved in a traffic accident in Canada.

The caller uses fear, sympathy, and personal attachment to family members to convince the person called to wire money to a relative in need. The callers have pretended to be a grandson and have used the correct name of the relative. The scam artists stated he’s been in accident and needs money wire transferred quickly to pay for the rental car or damage to property or medical expenses. When the grandparent recognizes that the voice of the caller doesn’t sound quite like his or her grandson the caller states he a cold or stresses in a panic that he was just involved in an accident. The caller requests an immediate wire transfer to them in Canada (ranging from \$3000 to \$4500) to help them. They also ask the victim not to tell his “parents” and they’ll pay the grandparent back upon return from Canada. If the victim sends the money they will most likely receive another “emergency” call requesting even more.

Other variations of the scam include a caller claiming to be a Canadian police officer or hospital official. The caller provides the correct name of the family member to the victim and instructs them to send money for their family members bail to secure release or provides a number to call for instructions on how to send money for emergency medical expenses.

The victims have been instructed to go to the nearest Wal-mart and send the money to the “grandson” via Money Gram. What the victim may not know is that a Money Gram can be picked up anywhere in the world, no matter what location the sender writes on the receipt. Wal-marts are most likely chosen because they are easy to find in most areas and they offer Money Grams. The Fairmont Wal-Mart recognized the fraud when a victim attempted to Money Gram \$4500 to Canada. The Fairmont Police Department was called and further investigation showed that the grandson was just fine in southern Minnesota, not injured in an accident in Canada.

Investigation into these types of frauds typically crosses international borders which makes prosecution unlikely and the recovery of any lost funds near impossible. Area residents are advised that if they receive this type of call they should not wire transfer money and law enforcement should be contacted. Independent verification of a family member’s welfare and location can typically be made with a few phone calls.

- ## -

Greg Brolsma
Chief of Police
Fairmont Police Department
gbrolsma@fairmont.org