

The Upper Providence Police Department was recently notified by a resident of a common telephone scam occurring in the area. The resident received a telephone call from an individual who claimed to be his friend. The friend alleged he had been involved in an accident in the Dominican Republic and requested that the resident send him bail money. The resident called his friend, confirmed he was not in the Dominican Republic, and found that he was the target of a scam.

This is commonly referred to as a “Grandparent Scam” and has numerous variations generally revolving around a telephone call made by an individual who claims to be a friend or relative of the victim. The individual claims that he has been arrested or mugged in a foreign country and has an urgent need for cash. Often, the individual will claim to be embarrassed and beg for secrecy. If money is wired, additional calls are usually received requesting additional funds from callers who pose as attorneys, bail bondsmen, or doctors.

Another common fraud seen in the Township is the International Lottery Scam or Sweepstakes Scam. In these scams potential victims receive notification in the mail advising that they have won an International Lottery or Sweepstakes, and they can begin to collect their winnings as soon as they pay applicable taxes or insurance.

A third common scam seen occurring in the Township are Employment or Mystery Shopping Scams. This generally occurs when a potential victim receives a response from a posted resume or responds to an advertisement for a Mystery Shopper. Checks are provided to the victim to do their particular job, and they are directed to wire remaining money back to their “employer”. The checks are no good and the victim is out the money of the deposit.

Residents are warned to be suspicious of any unsolicited mailings related to lotteries, sweepstakes, or containing checks. Ignore these notifications and report the mail to your local post master. Residents are also encouraged to contact family members or friends if they receive calls consistent with “Grandparent Scams”, and to research any potential employers with the Better Business Bureau before accepting work as a “secret shopper”.