



PUBLIC SAFETY ANNOUNCEMENT

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Grandparent Scam

Beware of Grandparent Scam

Beware if you receive an urgent phone call from someone claiming to be a family member.

This is how the grandparent scam typically plays out: You get a call from someone pretending to be your grandchild. The person explains that he is in trouble, with a story that goes something like this: "There's been an accident and I'm _____ (in jail, in the hospital, stuck in a foreign country), and I need your help." The caller adds enough details about how, what or where the emergency happened to make the story seem plausible. And the distraught caller, you think to yourself, does sort of sound like your grandson or granddaughter.

Often the caller tells you that a third person, such as a lawyer, doctor or police officer, will "explain everything to you" if you call him or her. This makes it seem more real when you call and talk to the *authority*. Then the caller asks you to send or wire money immediately, with the kicker, "Please, don't tell Mom and Dad!"

This financial ruse has been making the rounds in various incarnations for years. In 2017 nearly one in five people reported losing money in an impostor scheme like the grandparent scam, amounting to a loss of \$328 million, according to the FTC. And those ages 70 and older have suffered the highest average losses.

The scammers are very good at what they do — they make the story very convincing and urgent so that you wouldn't want to make a mistake. The stakes are incredibly high, and they're good at pulling at your emotions. They know how to get your fight-or-flight response activated so that your critical thinking faculties are just not the way they are normally.

How to protect yourself

Ramp up the privacy settings on your social media accounts and safeguard your email by using antivirus and anti-spyware software, the Consumer Federation of America advises. Also, don't open attachments in emails from people you don't know or aren't in close contact with, because they may contain software programs that enable criminals to access your computer remotely.

If you're a victim of a grandparent scam or another form of fraud, report it to the FTC at ftc.gov/complaint or by calling 1-877-FTC-HELP. AARP's Fraud Watch Network also provides tips and advice on how to spot and avoid scams.

