



PRESS RELEASE

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COLORADO ATTORNEY GENERAL CYNTHIA H. COFFMAN ISSUES ALERT TO CONSUMERS ON THREATENING TWIST TO GRANDPARENT PHONE SCAM

DENVER— A popular telephone scam targeting older citizens has taken a threatening new twist. The grandparent scam is often perpetrated when an older adult is called by someone pretending to be a grandchild or relative. The caller may claim they were arrested in a foreign country for drunk driving or were involved in a car accident. They ask the potential victim to send money so they can return home safely and not to tell anyone so they don't get into more trouble.

Recent national reports have indicated that the callers are now demanding money to be sent immediately in order to free a kidnapped relative. The callers are threatening physical harm to the relative if funds are not delivered. Victims are often ordered to stay on the phone until the ransom money is wired. The requested ransom payments range from \$600 to more than \$1,900 and are often sent to a third party. Some reports have stated that even after the payment was made, the scammers claim it wasn't received and demanded additional funds.

“Coloradans should be vigilant in safeguarding themselves and their loved ones from these types of calls. It is important to talk to family members and older adults about imposter phone calls, how to recognize them, and what they should do if they receive one,” warned Colorado Attorney General Cynthia Coffman. “The thought of a kidnapped loved one is terrifying, but recipients of these calls must try to remain calm and level headed.”

What to do if you receive a telephone call that may be a grandparent kidnapping scam:

- If you are certain the call is fraudulent (*e.g.*, you do not have grandchildren), hang up immediately and file a fraud report at www.stopfraudcolorado.gov/report.
- Ask to speak with the relative directly, not only to ensure they're alright but to make sure it's them. Family passwords can be useful to identify the voice on the phone.
- If you're not allowed to speak to the relative, ask the alleged 'kidnapper' to describe your relative. Remember, if your relative has a social media account, the caller may have an accurate description of them.
- If possible, try to use another phone or computer to reach your relative directly. If you're able to reach your relative and can determine the call is a scam, hang up and file a fraud report at www.stopfraudcolorado.gov/report immediately.

If you believe your relative is the victim of a real kidnapping, contact your local police, sheriff, or FBI office.

Grandparent Kidnapping Scam Warning Signs:

- Call originates from an out-of-state or foreign area code and not from the relative's phone.
- Alleged kidnappers try to keep you on the phone; real kidnappers usually hang up in order to prevent the call from being traced.
- Alleged kidnappers demand the ransom payment be sent by a wire transfer service such as Western Union or MoneyGram.

For more information on imposter scams or to report fraud, please visit www.StopFraudColorado.gov. To speak to a representative call 1-800-222-4444.

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