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CRIME PREVENTION ALERT

Beware of “Grandkids” Calling for Cash

A scam that was so well known a few years ago is making a comeback.

And if you are a grandparent, you need to be aware of this one.

The scam sometimes referred to as “It’s me! Swindle. What happens is this: Someone calls an elderly person pretending to be a grandchild in trouble and in need of money. How do they get away with it? It’s simpler than it seems. The caller will start with something like, “Hi Grandma, how are you?” Of course you are racking your brain trying to think of which grandkid this might be, so you take a guess. “Is that you David?”

STOP right there. You’ve just made a big mistake, because the answer will be Yeah Grandma it’s me David. And I really need your help.

What follows will be a sob story about some situation the kid is in and how he needs money wired to him--fast. His car is broken down and he is stranded or his wallet is stolen or he is in jail and need of bail money.

The grandparent scam preys on a victim’s natural willingness to help a family member in a crisis. This is the cruelest scam around.

Here are some safety tips for the grandparent so they will not become a victim of this scam:

- **DO NOT** fill in the blanks for the caller. Rather than asking if the caller is a specific grandchild, ask “Which one?” or “Who is this?” The caller will likely hang up.
- Ask the caller lots of personal questions that only the family member will know.
- Even if the person gives you a plausible name, call your grandchild’s family, school, or workplace to confirm his or her whereabouts.
- **DO NOT** give out any personal information, such as your bank account or credit card number.
- **DO NOT** send money unless you have verified that your relative is really in trouble.
- **NEVER** follow the directions of the person on the phone, even if one or more caller is involved.
- **Keep in mind** the urgent request to wire or transfer money, it is a sign of a scam.

If you have already been taken in by this scam, call the police and report it immediately by calling the following number:

To file a report call the West Sacramento Police Dispatch number at

(916) 372-3375

If you have further questions, please call the West Sacramento Police Department Crime Prevention Unit at (916) 617-4937.