

Sophisticated Phone Scams on the Rise

No person or organization is immune from cyber attacks! Cybercriminals are bending technology in a way that can be confusing and costly to their victims.

Our colleagues at Maryland State Police are warning the public about “spoofing.” This type of attack involves a caller who pretends to be from within the agency and the phone number that shows in caller ID looks legitimate.

State Police recently reported that citizens have received calls from a State Police number and were told that they were part of a criminal investigation, requested person information or asked for money (actually gift cards) to avoid being arrested.

The State Police point out that they would never solicit that kind of information from any citizen. In fact, if someone calls YOU and asks for money, it is most likely a sign that the call is bogus. If any of us gets a call like that, we should hang up and report the call and the number to the police. This is just one of several phone “spoofing” scams reported to Maryland State Police.

Here are some good tips from the SANS (SysAdmin, Audit, Network and Security) Institute:

- A good rule of thumb... **never give anyone any financial information** over the phone unless YOU INITIATE THE CALL.
- Anytime anyone calls you and creates a tremendous sense of urgency, pressuring you to do something, **be extremely suspicious**. Even if the phone call seems OK at first, but then starts to feel strange, you can stop and say no at any time.
- If you believe a phone call is an attack, **simply hang up**. If you want to confirm if the phone call was legitimate, go to the organization’s website (such as your bank) and get the customer support phone number and call them directly yourself. That way, you really know you are talking to the real organization.
- **Never trust Caller ID**. Bad guys will often spoof the caller number so it looks like it is coming from a legitimate organization or has the same area code as your phone number.
- **Never allow a caller to take temporary control of your computer** or trick you into downloading software. This is how bad guys can infect your computer.
- If a phone call is coming from someone you do not personally know, **let the call go directly to voicemail**. This way, you can review unknown calls on your own time. Even better, you can enable this by default on many phones with the “Do Not Disturb” feature.

Phone scams and attacks are on the rise. You are the best defense against them.