

FRAUD ALERT!

ARE YOU REALLY MY GRANDCHILD?

There has been an increase in what has been referred to as the "Emergency Scam" or the "Grandparent Scam." **Local persons from Ossian/Wells County have been affected. It can happen to you or someone you love.**

Senior citizens are contacted, usually late at night, by a scammer posing as a panicked grandchild. All the caller has to say is, "Grandma?" The grandparent will guess the name of the grandchild it sounds most like and then continue to feed personal information to the scammer. The alleged grandchild typically explains that they were arrested, have an emergency, were involved in an auto accident or got into trouble while traveling.

At this point, the "grandchild" needs the grandparent to wire money immediately for bail or to pay for damages. In addition, the scammer will beg the senior citizen not to contact other relatives because he or she does not want to "get into trouble".

Law enforcement officials are not certain how perpetrators are obtaining the phone numbers for so many seniors or senior housing complexes across the U.S. It is believed that scammers are most likely calling random numbers until they reach a senior citizen, or they research senior housing units on the internet. While many seniors have reported the scam without falling prey to it, unfortunately, many others have been victimized.

The key to avoiding this scam is to:

- Remain calm despite the 'emergency' nature of the call. Resist the pressure to "act now."
- Make attempts to verify the identity of the caller, i.e. ask questions about the name of their grade school, a pet, another relative or a childhood memory only a close relative would know.
- Contact the actual grandchild's home or cell phone, or other family member directly to verify the story before taking any further action.
- Understand that a request to wire money through Western Union or MoneyGram is a "red flag" and an immediate tip-off that the call may be part of a scam. Funds sent via wire transfer are hard to track once received by scammers and are usually not recoverable by law enforcement or banking officials.

If you or someone you know was a victim of this or another scam, please contact your local police department.

If you have friends or loved ones who could be vulnerable to this scheme, please share this information and encourage them to check out any situation similar to this that may arise.

If you have further questions, please talk to one of Ossian State Bank's employees.