

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Delaware Justice system warns of phone scam targeting probationers

The Delaware Judiciary, Delaware Department of Justice, Department of Correction and Delaware State Police are warning the public of a phone scam that is apparently targeting probationers.

The Delaware State Police have received information about fraudulent callers threatening individuals on probation with re-arrest for allegedly committing new crimes. In at least one case, the caller then further demanded the victim deliver cash to a certain location to avoid re-arrest.

"We see the same pattern almost every year: scammers impersonate agents of the Courts or of law enforcement to scare vulnerable people into giving up untraceable money they can scarcely afford to lose," said Attorney General Jennings. "Let me be crystal clear: nobody from the DOJ, the Courts, or law enforcement will ever demand immediate payment over the phone, let alone in cash or gift cards. When in doubt, hang up, look up the agency's real number, and call them."

According to the victim, the call came from a phone number associated with the Delaware Court system, and the caller identified himself as a court official. Many scammers "spoof" phone numbers to obscure their identity or to make their scam appear authentic.

The Delaware Courts, DOJ, DOC, and DSP remind the public that nobody associated with the court system has, or will, ever call and demand cash.

The DOJ also reminds residents to be extra diligent about this or other telephone scams by:

- Never agreeing – unless you have initiated the call -- to pay any fine or other money over the phone, including by purchasing a money order or gift card at a store and providing the number to someone over the phone or by email. Government agencies will not contact you to make payments by phone.
- Being extra careful when answering calls from unknown numbers or unfamiliar persons. Scams can be "spoofed" to appear to be coming from a local number, even though the call is originating from out of state or overseas.
- If in doubt, Delawareans can hang up on a caller claiming to be from an official agency, look up the agency's number, and call it to confirm the authenticity of the call.

- Hanging up on threatening callers, particularly threats of arrest.

Anyone who believes that they have been the victim of these calls, or of any other crime, should contact local law enforcement.

Payments can be made to a specific court. Also, the agencies emphasized that payments for Court-imposed costs, fines and restitution and for probationary fees, like interstate compact and supervision, are collected by the Office of State Court Collections Enforcement (OSCCE) in person at OSCCE office locations, on-line through its website, by phone-in with a credit card or at approved Payment Kiosk locations in a variety of state offices. Learn more about OSCCE payment collections and locations at <https://courts.delaware.gov/aoc/oscce/epayments.aspx> and <https://courts.delaware.gov/aoc/oscce/locations.aspx>. Individuals should be suspicious of any request they receive requesting or demanding payment of any fines, fees, and costs by any other means.

Anyone who has a question, or need assistance in paying any of these assessments, please contact the Office of State Court Collections Enforcement at (302) 255-0339.

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