



WARRENTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

**** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ****

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Ransom Scam Calls

Warrenton, OR – Two incidents of the Ransom Scam were recently reported to the WPD. The ransom scam is where someone calls you stating they have a child or loved one and demand money before they let them go. The caller is usually yelling and has someone screaming in the background.

Though you may think this type of call is far-fetched it can seem extremely real and the callers are very good at playing on your emotions and creating a very tense atmosphere where it is difficult to think. Add in that your loved one is not with you so there is a possibility, no matter how unlikely, that they have been grabbed by someone. Especially if they are a child.

The first incident involved a father who was out-of-state and could not reach his wife to determine if his daughter was safe or kidnapped. The WPD Officer was able to contact the mother and daughter and the call was ended. The second incident involved a father here in Warrenton who received a ransom call and his wife was unable to reach their daughters and then called the police. In this case, the caller had the parents, understandably, very upset and wanting to protect their daughters.

Both daughters were confirmed safe and the Officer got on the line with the "kidnapper." After calling the Officer several expletives he said he was not going to stop running this scam because people keep falling for it.

From the National Institutes of Health (<https://www.ors.od.nih.gov/News/Pages/Beware-of-Virtual-Kidnapping-Ransom-Scam.aspx>) provides the following possible indicators:

- Calls do not come from the alleged kidnapped victim's phone.
- Callers go to great lengths to keep you on the phone.
- Callers prevent you from calling or locating the "kidnapped" victim.
- Ransom money is only accepted via wire transfer service (in the Warrenton case they wanted the father to purchase pre-paid credit cards at Walmart).

And the following tips:

- Try to slow the situation down. Request to speak to the victim directly. Ask, "How do I know my loved one is okay?"
- If the callers don't let you speak to the victim, ask them to describe the victim or describe the vehicle the victim drives, if applicable.
- Listen carefully to the voice of the kidnapped victim if he/she speaks.

- Attempt to call, text, or contact the alleged victim via social media. Request that the victim call back from his or her cell phone.
- While staying on the line with the alleged kidnappers, try to call the alleged kidnap victim from another phone.
- To buy time, repeat the caller's request and tell them you are writing down the demand, or tell the caller you need additional time to meet their demands.
- Don't directly challenge or argue with the caller. Keep your voice low and steady.
- Request the alleged kidnapper allow the victim to call you back from his/her cell phone.
- At the earliest opportunity, notify your local police department.
- To help prevent this scam, check privacy settings on social media accounts and revisit the information you publicize on those accounts. The more information available to the public, the more information scammers can use to convince you into believing a scam is real.

Scam calls are almost impossible to track or to find the suspect(s). The majority are originating from outside of the United States and the numbers are being spoofed with US phone numbers. If you have questions or believe you are being scammed, please contact your local police department.

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