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The Monthly Brief

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NEW FAMILY SCAM

A crook posing as an officer called a local senior victim and said his adult son had been injured and arrested after a traffic accident out of state. The victim was completely convinced as his son was in that area attending a funeral.

Taking it to a new level the victim was told his son had suffered facial injuries in the crash and couldn't speak clearly or for long. Another male then got on the line and confirmed that he needed \$900 sent immediately to the officer.

The victim was told to direct transfer the money from his bank account to a Wells Fargo account provided by the scammer. But bank employees suspecting a scam refused to go along. The victim was so deceived by the scam that he went to a check cashing service and even Western Union before being convinced it was a scam.

Our hats are off to employees of the bank, check cashing and money wire services for recognizing the warning signs, stopping the transfer and alerting the police.

It's suspected that crooks used social media to obtain the information for this scam.

If you're contacted by anyone requesting assistance for a friend or relative, always verify independently what you're being told by the caller. Another great way to avoid this scam is to set up a "Security Pass Phrase" with your family. Something only they will know and the scammers won't be able to answer.

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Wire Fraud Recovery Program

If you lost money to a scammer who had you pay using Western Union between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017, you can now file a claim to get your money back.

For years, many people who lost money to scams sent their payment through a Western

Union wire transfer. Scammers contacted people and promised prizes, loans, jobs, discounted products or other financial rewards in exchange for money upfront. They also pretended to be family members in need of cash or law enforcement officers demanding payment. The scammers told people to send money through Western Union. No one received the cash, prizes or services they were promised.

Because of joint investigations by the FTC, the Department of Justice (DOJ), and U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Western Union agreed to pay \$586 million and admitted to aiding and abetting wire fraud. DOJ is now using that money to provide refunds to people who were tricked into using Western Union to pay scammers.

Each person's claim must be verified by DOJ and only the amount you transferred via Western Union is eligible for a refund. To file your claim click the FTC logo above or use this link to visit the FTC website: <http://bit.ly/2zFYOcv>



UNHAPPY HOLIDAY SCAMS



During the holiday season scammers ramp up their efforts to take advantage of both the goodwill of consumers and the inevitable rush to find a great deal on this year's hot products and services.

With so many scams in play this year, thanks in part to the Equifax breach, we didn't want to feature just one for this issue. So instead we've gathered links to some very helpful websites that are highlighting the top scams being seen this year.

AARP: This long time organization has really stepped up their game in helping consumers avoid scams. This year they published the top 7 schemes to watch out for.

FTC: Giving to others in need at the holidays is a great idea but getting ripped off by scammers posing as charities can leave you feeling like Scrooge. The Federal Trade Commission has put together this great resource page for avoiding them.

BBB: Extra money for the holidays can be great but scammers are also using fake job offers to rip off victims. The BBB has put together a list of recent scams and ways to avoid them.