

Jerry Manor:

Welcome to the SeaComm Podcast, your place for the latest on what's happening at SeaComm and helpful tips on saving and protecting your money.

Hi everyone, Jerry Manor here. People are losing big money to criminals running sophisticated scams. Today on SeaComm Money Matters, imposter scams. An imposter scam is when the crook lies and pretends to be someone they're not to trick you into giving them money, access to your financial accounts or your personal information.

Scammers often pretend to be from a business you know or from a government agency or both. They try to gain your trust and get you to believe they're who they claim to be, and they're very good at it. They will often fake a caller ID to convince you they're with the government or a business you recognize, such as your financial institution or utility you deal with. Scammers give you an employee ID or badge number or use the name of a real government employee.

They may also send official looking letters with seals and made up government agency names that sound real, but aren't. Some types of imposter scams include government impersonators where scammers pretend to be from government agencies like the FTC, Social Security or Medicare. Sometimes they'll claim to be from law enforcement and tell you you need to give them money to avoid arrest or that you missed jury duty and need to pay a fine.

Tech support scammers try to convince you to pay them to fix a non-existent computer problem. They may also cause a pop-up on your screen that tells you there's a problem and you need to call the number to get it fixed. They may send you a bogus invoice that says you're going to be charged hundreds of dollars to renew a membership if you don't call to cancel within 24 hours. Scammers may pose as a family member in distress and in need of money or sweepstakes claiming you've won a prize.

There are also the fake failed delivery notices for UPS or FedEx, and of course, the fake toll scam that usually comes by text. It doesn't end there though. There are fake employment offers, investment schemes, and crooks who contact upset travelers through fake social media accounts and pretend to be an airline customer service representative who's looking to help.

Another insidious scam involves someone supposedly spotting fraud or criminal activity on one of your accounts offering to help protect your money. Sometimes asking you to share verification codes and always telling you to move money from your financial institution, investment, or retirement account. And every bit of it is a scam.

Your money's fine where it is no matter what they say or how urgently they say it. Moving it means you'll lose it, not protect it. Someone who says you have to move your money to protect it is a scammer, period. Bottom line is to never, ever give out any information or money unless you initiate the contact.

If somebody contacts you by phone, by email, by text, and even by mail, you can't be sure if it's legitimate. And now with artificial intelligence, it's even more difficult. Remember, when someone wants you to give them information or money urgently, it's almost always a scam. Don't ever do something immediately. Step back and think, then contact the organization in question, not at the number they give you, but at a number you know is real. And don't Google a phone number. Those can be fake too.

If there's a problem with your account or identity, always talk about it with someone you trust, especially if the stranger on the phone says it's serious or involves a crime or claims to be from the government. I'm Jerry Manor. Thank you for joining us for this edition of the SeaComm Podcast. We hope you'll listen in again.