Dallas FBI office warns of scams targeting seniors

Staff report  Jul 30, 2016

DALLAS—The Federal Bureau of Investigation Dallas Division has received reports of a recent wave of scam attempts targeting senior citizens in North Texas – particularly in the Sherman and Denison areas, officials said Friday.

According to a news release on the scam, callers with foreign accents identify themselves as FBI agents and “typically tell people they have won a lottery and must pay ‘taxes’ in advance via commercial money transfer companies to receive their winnings.”

These phone calls are fraudulent and call recipients should hang up immediately, according to the FBI.

The FBI has no affiliation to any lotteries and does not call members of the public demanding money.

Additionally, a scam phone call may seem legitimate because scammers can spoof caller ID information. It may appear the call is coming from a legitimate FBI phone number or from Washington, D.C. The FBI strongly encourages anyone contacted by a caller who says they are with the FBI to verify the information with the bureau.

The main telephone number for the FBI office in Dallas is 972-559-5000; contact information for other FBI field offices can be found at www.fbi.gov.

In similar scams, callers have claimed to be with the IRS, Drug Enforcement Administration or another government agency.

No matter who the caller claims to be, everyone should be suspicious and verify the caller’s information with the appropriate agency, officials said.
There are many versions of the government impersonation scam, but they are all variations of the same tactic. This type of scam has been around for years and targets people across the country, according to the news release.

In some instances, after the victims stop sending money, the scammers continue to contact the victims via email purporting to be high-level FBI executives threatening arrest on money laundering charges unless more money is sent.

If one becomes a victim of a phone or e-mail scam, they can file an online complaint with the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.IC3.gov.

Filing a complaint through IC3’s website allows analysts from the FBI to identify leads and patterns from the hundreds of complaints that are received daily. Compiling and analyzing these complaints can lead to stronger cases and help zero in on the major sources of criminal activity. The IC3 then refers the complaints, along with their analyses, to the relevant law enforcement agency for follow-up.

The Federal Trade Commission—the nation’s consumer protection agency—offers the following advice to avoid falling victim to lottery scams and other telemarketing frauds:

• Don’t pay money to collect supposed lottery or sweepstakes winnings. If you have to pay to collect, you are not winning, you are buying. Legitimate sweepstakes don’t require you to pay insurance, taxes, or shipping and handling fees to collect your prize.

• Scammers pressure people to wire money through commercial money transfer companies because wiring money is the same as sending cash. When the money’s been sent, there’s very little chance of recovery. Likewise, resist any push to send a check or money order by overnight delivery or courier. Con artists recommend these services so they can get their hands on your money before you realize you’ve been cheated.

• Remember that phone numbers can deceive. Internet technology allows scammers to disguise their area code so it looks like they’re calling from your local area, but they could be calling from anywhere in the world.