

**Press
Release****The City of Palo Alto**
Public Information Office250 Hamilton Ave
Palo Alto, CA 94301

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE #050509

Subject : **Police Warn Seniors of "Favorite Grandson" Telephone Scam****Contact :** Agent Dan Ryan, Palo Alto Police Department 408-406-1330

Palo Alto, CA - Recently, Palo Alto police have responded to three similar cases in which callers have posed as young relatives of the elderly victims, in order to scam the seniors out of large sums of cash.

Typically, the caller telephones an elderly citizen, addresses him/her by name and identifies himself as the "favorite grandson." When the victim doesn't immediately recognize the caller's voice, the victim will often start to name off their younger relative, which gives the scammer a chance to discover the name of a relative and then assume that identity. Strange-sounding voices will be explained by a bad telephone connection or because the caller is suffering from a head-cold.

The caller will then explain that he was visiting another city when he was arrested for a drunk driving offense or involved in a traffic collision while driving a rental vehicle. The caller will ask the victim to wire him some cash, so that he can make bail or pay for the repair to the rental vehicle before he can leave that city and return home. To avoid detection, the caller will often pretend to be embarrassed and ask the victim to avoid mentioning his "mishap" to other family members. He often will state that "his attorney" or a local police official will call the victim next to explain where the money should be sent.

The second caller, "the official," will direct the victim to send the money via a money-gram or Western Union. Once the money is sent, it can be collected by the con-artist with an agreed-upon password from anywhere in the country. The criminal most often uses fraudulent identification and the crime is usually not reported for several days, which makes it difficult to apprehend the scammers.

One victim lost nearly \$8,000 over the course of three "desperate" calls. A second lost \$3,800. A third had already started to send the money before she cancelled the exchange after consulting with a relative.

Police warn all residents to be very cautious when answering any similar, unsolicited calls. Consult with a family member before sending any money, and report any suspicious calls to the police.

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