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Public Alerted to Unpaid Loan Debt and Traffic Ticket Payment Scams

September 26, 2013 | 10:10 AM

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San Francisco police are alerting the public to a telephone scam involving the demand for payment for what are presented as overdue loan debts, and a telephone scam involving payment for traffic tickets supposedly issued by the San Francisco Police Department. In these calls, often the caller ID is that of the SFPD, showing a legitimate police department number.

In the unpaid loan scam, the caller identifies himself as a police officer, stating that he is acting on behalf of “Mark Rothman & Associates.” To prevent criminal proceedings or a bench warrant being issued, the caller demands an “interim payment.” The caller instructs the victim to purchase a \$500 Green Dot MoneyPak or Vanilla Gift card or similar cash-load card as payment and to call a specific number once this is done. Once the victim has purchased the card and called the number, the victim is instructed to give the card information, and a phony proof-of-payment e-mail is sent. Once that information is given, all the money on the card is fraudulently used.

In the unpaid traffic ticket scam, the caller claims to be from the San Francisco Police Department and may even fraudulently use the name of an actual San Francisco police officer. The caller states that there is money due, \$154 or more, on unpaid traffic tickets and that a bench warrant will be issued unless payment is received. Payment is demanded through a similar cash-load card process and, again, the money on the card is used.

These fraudulent contacts may also be done through e-mail or pre-recorded calls.

As a matter of policy, the police department never contacts citizens for payment under any circumstances, including for outstanding traffic citations or for any civil debt.

Citizens are urged not to comply with such requests, and to report such calls to the police. Green Dot MoneyPak cards and similar cash-load cards have recently been the focus of scam artists throughout the country. Citizens should never provide the card number and security clearance codes to a caller or in response to an e-mail.

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