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SFPD Warn Chinese Community of Latest Scam Incident

August 11, 2016 | 10:27 AM

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San Francisco police are alerting the Chinese community of the latest in an ongoing series of scams targeting older Chinese victims, resulting in great financial loss. The latest reported incident occurred on January 19 on the 2500 block of Noreiga Street at approximately 10:15 A.M. As a result of the scam, the victim, a 70-year-old San Francisco woman, incurred a loss of currency and valuables amounting to approximately \$50,000.

In this incident, the victim was approached by the first of three Cantonese-speaking suspects, all female, just after the victim left a restaurant. One suspect asked her if she knew where to find a particular Chinese doctor. As part of the scam, the second suspect pretends to have overheard the conversation, telling the suspect that she knows where to find the doctor. These two suspects then convince the victim to walk with them to the supposed location of the doctor, on the 1600 block of Noreiga Avenue.

At this point, the two suspects meet up on the street with the third suspect acting as the doctor, who, in conversation with the victim, tells her that she is suffering from an illness and that she is under a curse that will adversely affect her loved ones. To relieve the curse, the victim must present her with valuables to be “blessed,” thus relieving the curse.

The suspects accompanied the victim to her home, where she got her valuables, consisting of currency and jewelry, and brought them to the suspects waiting on the street nearby. A “blessing” was performed and, in a dexterous switch, another bag

containing worthless items was given to the victim, who was instructed not to look in the bag for a specified amount of time, lest the “blessing” be invalidated.

Police obtained video surveillance footage of the incident and it accompanies this press release. The three suspects are all wearing hats. The suspect vehicle in the video is on the left, a late model, silver Toyota Prius. A fourth suspect, a Chinese male, remained in the car.

San Francisco police urge older members of the Chinese community to be suspicious of strangers claiming to provide relief from a curse or who provide “purification” ceremonies in which cash and valuable items must be

offered as part of the process. Potential victims are strongly advised to contact police immediately if confronted with such a situation.

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