

CHARLESTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Sheriff Carl Ritchie
3691 Leeds Avenue
North Charleston, SC 29405




NON-EMERGENCY
843-202-1700


DISPATCH
843-743-7200

CCSO issues holiday scam alert for older adults

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, November 24, 2025

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. – As the holiday season approaches, the Charleston County Sheriff's Office is asking older adults and their families to stay alert.

"Scammers are getting smarter, using AI, voice cloning, and spoofed phone numbers to trick even the most cautious individuals," said Lexi Douglas, Public Information Officer for the Charleston County Sheriff's Office. "Our detectives get calls every day about older adults who have taken out thousands of dollars because they have fallen for one of these scams, and we know staying informed is the best defense."

Below is a list of the five most common scams currently:

Scams to Watch Out For:

- **Government Impersonation** – Fake calls from the "IRS," "Social Security," or "Police" claiming your identity is compromised or that there's a warrant for your arrest.
- **Tech Support Scams** – Pop-ups or calls falsely claiming your computer is infected, asking for remote access or unusual forms of payment.
- **Phishing Emails** – Messages that appear to be from banks, Amazon, or government agencies, urging you to click suspicious links or call fake numbers.
- **Romance & Friendship Scams** – Fraudulent online relationships that build emotional trust before asking for money—often using AI-generated photos or deepfake videos.
- **The Grandparent Scam** – A caller pretends to be a grandchild in trouble, using AI to mimic their voice and create a sense of urgency.

The Sheriff's Office shares that remembering these three Rs could help people pause and think twice before acting, with the hopes of saving people from becoming a victim.

- **RETHINK** – If it causes panic or fear, slow down.
- **REFUSE** – Never pay with gift cards, crypto, or payment apps.
- **RESEARCH** – Hang up and verify the story by calling the real number.

CONTACT Public Information Office | pio@charlestoncounty.org

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People should never send payment to scammers in any way, but especially with gift cards (Apple, Amazon, etc.), cryptocurrency (Bitcoin ATMs), payment apps (Zelle, Venmo), wire transfers, and/or cash couriers. People are also reminded to never give remote access to their computers or devices, nor should they share any personal information (Social Security, Medicare, or bank info).

What to Do If You've Been Scammed or Targeted

1. Report the Incident Locally

- Charleston County Sheriff's Office (CCSO): If you or a loved one were the victim of a scam, call the Non-Emergency Line at 843-202-1700.
- South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs: To file a consumer complaint or get education and support at 1-800-922-1594.
- Adult Protective Services (APS): If you suspect a vulnerable adult (including yourself) is being abused, neglected, or financially exploited in the community, call the 24/7 reporting hotline at 1-888-CARE4US (1-888-227-3487).

2. Contact Your Financial Institution

3. Report to National Agencies

- Federal Trade Commission (FTC): Report all scams, regardless of financial loss, at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://reportfraud.ftc.gov) or call 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357).
- FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3): For internet-related or major financial crimes, go to www.ic3.gov.

4. Get Local Support

- AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline: Provides free support at 1-877-908-3360.

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