

Have you been on the receiving end of a harassing phone call from someone claiming to be the IRS, telling you that there is a warrant for your arrest and the only way you can avoid spending time in jail is to pay an outlandish fine over the phone?

The St. Johns County Sheriff's Office has issued a warning to our citizens about the increase of such phone scams. Many residents have reported receiving a call from a male individual who claimed to be either a member of the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office advising the victims that there is an outstanding warrant for them for missing jury duty or the IRS saying they owe back taxes. In January alone, victims have been scammed out of \$30,000, and that is only from the victims that have been brave enough to report the crime.

The male individual would tell the victims they would have to pay a fine or face arrest. The male making these phone calls has been said to be harsh, forceful, and demanding in demeanor.

Be advised that Con Artists along with other criminals attempt to find easy ways to steal money or identities from their victims. These types of scams may vary from one like this one and their targets can be anyone, although many times our elderly are singled out.

In order to appear credible, these scammers may provide information like badge numbers, the names of actual law enforcement officials and federal judges, and courthouse addresses. They may also spoof their phone numbers to appear on caller ID as if they are calling from the court or a government agency.

We want to reiterate once again that neither the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office nor the IRS will contact you via phone in reference to missed jury duty or unpaid taxes. They will not contact you about a possible warrant that is out for your arrest either.

Furthermore, neither the SJSO nor the IRS will request payment over the phone, or in the form of any kind of Green Dot card, iTunes gift card, or any other form of money card.

For your protection, DO NOT give out personal information based on a phone call, email, or text message.

DO NOT assume the number they provide is a legitimate number to that organization, always look up the number in the phone book or search it yourself to validate the number. You can also call your local sheriff's office.

If you feel you are a victim of a scam, please contact your local law enforcement agency to validate any story they may provide.

Please spread the word and have conversations with your friends, family, and neighbors to make sure that they are aware that this scam is happening and what our protocols are so they don't fall victim to this scam. Suspects have already been able to scam many residents out of their hard-earned money, and we want it to STOP! Let's end it now.