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18th Judicial District of Kansas



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WICHITA, KAN. – “Microsoft will never proactively reach out to you to provide unsolicited PC or technical support. If you receive a phone call claiming to be from Microsoft, or see a pop-up window on your PC with a fake warning message and a phone number to call and get your “issue” fixed, it’s better to be safe and not click any links or provide any personal information.

Never call the number provided in the error message. Real Microsoft error messages never include a phone number to call.”

That information is at the top of Microsoft’s security page.

But a Wichita woman recently received a message on her computer which did include a phone number. Unfortunately, she called it. Over the course of the next few weeks, that decision cost her over \$100,000.

The person who answered the call told the woman, who is in her late 70s, that her social security number had been compromised and for security reasons, she needed to transfer money out of her bank account. The caller said Microsoft would then “clean” her computer of the virus. The woman was also told that others were listening in on her phone calls.

As instructed, the woman went to her bank and, when the teller asked why she wanted to withdraw such large sums from her account, the woman responded, “These are investments for my family.” The woman later told a consumer protection investigator from the District Attorney’s Office that the person on the phone had recommended she use the “investments” explanation if anyone at the bank questioned her about the withdrawals. She then transferred the money to accounts at the direction of the purported Microsoft “engineer.”

These calls continued between the woman and the alleged Microsoft “engineer” from July to September of this year. Before the woman’s family discovered what was happening, the woman had lost over \$100,000. Investigators with the Office of the District Attorney are in the process of trying to recover the money, but it is very rare that lost funds are able to be retrieved in cases like this.

Sadly, this scam is not new. The "Microsoft Scam" as it has come to be known has been around since 2009. The usual setup is for the scammers to call or email their intended target and identify themselves as a "technician" or "engineer" from Microsoft (or some Microsoft-related company). They then tell their target that their Windows-based computer has a virus (or other problem) that is causing it to generate all sorts of error messages on the Internet. They tell the target that any number of bad consequences await if action is not taken to correct the issue. Ultimately, the target is told they must transfer the money in their bank accounts to safe locations as directed by the scammer while the problem is corrected.

The District Attorney's Office does not want anyone else to fall into this trap. To avoid scams, please hang up the phone if you receive an unsolicited call from someone asking for personal information, or if the caller asks you to wire money, mail cash, or put money onto gift cards.

If you are the victim of a scam it should be reported. Make a report with your local law enforcement.

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