

ALABAMA SECURITIES COMMISSION

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ASC Offers Tips to Help You Avoid Costly Tricks this Halloween

Montgomery, Alabama (October 25, 2024) - As Halloween approaches, it's important to beware of more than ghosts, goblins and ghouls. The Alabama Securities Commission (ASC) urges Alabamians to be aware of con artists, disguised as honest individuals, with one goal in mind: stealing your money. The ASC reminds everyone to remain vigilant to avoid getting spoofed or tricked by scammers through imposter scams still haunting our communities.

An imposter scam involves a person and often a website or some form of correspondence that appears to be legitimate. The scammer may pretend to be a bill collector, government agency, law enforcement official, Publishers Clearing House, family member, or even a romantic interest. The contact is through a phone call, text, email or social media message from the scammer. The “grandparent” scam and the “court summons” scam are popular versions of these imposter scams. These scams begin with a phone call to the victim with an urgent message. In the “grandparent” scam, fraudsters use information collected from the victim’s social media account, including audio of the voices of the victim’s relatives, to convince the victim that the relative is being held hostage. Through the use of artificial intelligence fraudsters can replicate the voices of loved ones, making this scam quite convincing and frightening. Likewise, in “court summons” scams, fraudsters pretending to be law enforcement officials threaten to have the victim arrested or heavily fined for not appearing in court. The victims in these scams are then directed to send money immediately, using crypto ATMS or gift cards, in order to resolve the emergency.

Protect yourself this Halloween by listening for unusual phrasing, delayed responses, or choppy speech, and verify the fraud by asking specific questions that only your loved one could answer or establish a code word that only your family would know to use in an emergency. If you suspect a scam, hang up and try to contact the person directly or verify through another family member or friend.

Follow these tips from ASC to avoid scammers’ tricks:

- Hang up on those pretending to be law enforcement and making threats. State and federal courts will never make threatening calls demanding financial payment information or make threats for failing to comply.
- Never give out personal or financial information to a stranger who contacts you via phone, text, social media, or email.
- Never send money to a person or company demanding payment using non-traditional payment methods such as cryptocurrency, a crypto ATM, or gift cards.
- If money is involved, always verify. Contact the company or person directly using their official or published contact information.
- Never click on links within texts or emails that you are not expecting to receive.

“We have received hundreds of reports of imposter scams this year,” said ASC Director Amanda Senn. “Fraudsters are targeting victims at every age and background and have been successful in convincing many to turn over money and personal information. Victims suffer staggering financial losses and could spend years cleaning up the devastation from identity theft.”

The ASC urges Alabamians to help educate your community about safeguarding your money from fraudsters in disguise this Halloween. If you are suspicious of possible financial fraud or would like to request fraud prevention or financial literacy training for your group, call the ASC at 1-800-222-1253. Contact the ASC to report suspected fraud. Free investor education and fraud prevention materials are available at www.asc.alabama.gov.

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For further information contact 1-800-222-1253 and ask for Public Affairs.

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