

Beware of scam involving Canada Revenue Agency

Since early this year, OPP has been regularly warning the public about various scams that seem to be occurring throughout the province on a daily basis.

With the date for filing income tax returns in the past, and some Ontarians having recently received their tax refunds, one scam in particular that is continuing to catch many off-guard is the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) scam.

In the CRA scam, criminals will attempt to extort money from their victims by telephone, mail, text message or email, after they have received a fraudulent communication that claims to be from the Canada Revenue Agency requesting personal information, such as a social insurance number, credit card number, bank account number or passport number.

Fraudsters impersonate the real CRA and are either phishing for identification or asking that outstanding taxes be paid by a money service business or by pre-paid debit/credit cards. They may insist that the receiver of the call provide personal information so that they can receive a refund or a benefit payment. Cases of fraudulent communication could also involve threatening or coercive language to scare individuals into paying fictitious debt to the CRA. Other communications urge taxpayers to visit a fake CRA website where the taxpayer is then asked to verify their identity by entering personal information.

These are scams and taxpayers should never respond to these fraudulent communications nor click on any of the links provided. Calls such as these are even being received on personal and work related telecommunications devices.

Here are some warning signs:

? Urgency ? The scammer always makes the request sound very urgent, which may cause the victim to not verify the story.

? Fear ? The scammer plays on the victim's emotions by generating a sense of fear.

? Request for money transfer ? Money is usually requested to be sent by a money transfer company such as Money Gram, Western Union or even through one's own financial institution.

To avoid becoming a victim, police advise people to first check with another family member or trusted friend to verify the information before sending money or providing credit card information by phone or e-mail.

If you or someone you know suspect they've been a victim of the Emergency Scam or someone posing as a Canada Revenue Agency official, hang up and contact your local police service.

You can also file a complaint through the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS), or online at www.tipsubmit.com/start.htm