

TACKLING EMERGENCY, GRANDPARENT SCAMS]

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (CAFC) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are launching a fraud prevention campaign, February 6 to 10, 2023, to raise awareness about the significant increase in emergency-grandparent scams targeting Canadian seniors.

In 2022, the CAFC received fraud reports totalling a staggering \$530 million in victim losses. This was nearly a 40 per cent increase from the 2021 unprecedented \$380 million in losses, say Police. Fraudsters target anyone and everyone, particularly the vulnerable and seniors. In 2022, more than \$9.2 million was reported lost to emergency scams, according to the CAFC. This was a drastic increase from \$2.4 million in 2021.

Reports from residents indicate the five provinces most impacted in 2022 were:

Ontario - over \$5.4 million in reported losses;

Alberta - over \$1.1 million in reported losses;

Quebec - over \$732,000 in reported losses;

British Columbia - over \$322,000 in reported losses;

Manitoba - over \$313,000 in reported losses.

It is estimated that only 5-10 per cent of victims report scams and fraud to the CAFC or law enforcement.

What is an emergency scam?

Emergency scams, including variations called 'grandparent scams', use urgency and the manipulation of emotions to extort money from victims. In these scams, fraudsters cold call seniors, on landline phones, claiming to be a grandchild, family member, law enforcement officer or lawyer calling on behalf of their loved one. They'll say that the person's loved one was involved in an emergency situation, such as a collision, charged by law enforcement, legal peril, being sick or injured, etc. They demand the senior provide payment immediately for supposed bail, legal fees, fines or other amounts owed to stop the family member from going to jail or to get them released from custody. This is a scam.

The fraudsters isolate the victims by informing them that there is a court-imposed gag order, and they're forbidden from discussing the matter. The victims are directed to attend their financial institution to withdraw the requested amount in cash. The fraudsters will then send someone to pick it up from the victim's home or have the victim send the money via courier services. There have also been reports of victims paying with cryptocurrency.

Take action

Join the RCMP, CAFC and OPP in raising awareness from February 6-10, 2023. The partners will be posting social media tips, bulletins, and various other resources.

On February 7, 2023 at 1:00pm EST the OPP and CAFC will be hosting a live chat to discuss emergency-grandparent scams alongside an attempted victim who will share their experience.

If you fall victim to a fraud or know someone who has, contact your local police service to report the crime and also report it to the CAFC at 1-888-495-8501 or online on the Fraud Reporting System (FRS), even if a financial loss did not occur.

If you know a senior or have an elderly family member, please reach out to them and have a conversation on what to do if they get a phone call like this and consider coming up with a code word.

VEHICLE THEFTS ON THE RISE, POLICE WARN

Officers from the Dufferin detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) are investigating multiple new thefts of motor vehicles.

Dufferin County is impacted by an increased vehicle theft trend affecting the entire Greater Toronto Area, say Police. Recent reports indicate that RAM pick-up trucks, years 2020 to 2023, are predominantly targeted. On many occasions, thieves are observed in neighbourhoods prior to the thefts occurring to record VIN numbers and to disable alarm systems to facilitate the theft later. These crimes are often occurring in the early hours of the day, between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m.

If you observed suspicious activity in your neighbourhood, report it immediately by calling 9-1-1.

Auto theft crime prevention tips:

Today's auto thieves are increasingly turning to technology that bypasses security systems allowing vehicles to be stolen. Electronic auto theft is on the rise as more vehicles are equipped with technology such as keyless entry fobs. In fact, the insurance industry has seen the growing trend that thieves are able to copy fob information and steal cars right from your driveway.

The term relay thefts involves the use of equipment designed to boost and exploit the signals sent out by a vehicle's legitimate key fob. This allows for a thief to unlock and start an engine of a vehicle remotely.

Residents can help protect their vehicles by taking any of the following crime prevention measures:

Ensure your vehicle keys are kept well away from doors and windows;

Use a signal blocking pouch/box - they can block your key fob from transmitting its code to the vehicle as the pouch is lined with layers of metallic material;

Turn off the keyless fob wireless signal at night (refer to your car manual for instructions);

Use a steering wheel lock or car alarm - this could add a significantly delay or be a deterrent for thieves;

Consider a secondary audible car alarm - which works by using sensors placed in different points of your vehicle;

Park in the garage (if possible);

Insert a car tracker - unusual activity is monitored, and car can be tracked using GPS if stolen.

Police and its insurance industry partners also want to raise public awareness about the opportunities for criminals who intend to steal personal identification from unsecured vehicles. Licenses, insurance, vehicle ownerships, passports, as well as mobile devices or laptops, offer criminals the opportunity to further victimize individuals who do not lock their vehicles, or who leave their valuables in plain view.

Vehicle owners/passengers can do simple things to decrease the risk of being victimized, such as:

Never leave a running vehicle unattended;

Lock your doors;

Roll up your windows;

Keep valuables out of sight;

Keep your registration and proof of insurance in your wallet or purse, not in the glove box;

Pocket your keys;

At night or during extended parking periods, always park in a well-lit area.