

Elderly Woman Loses \$1,000 to Thief in IRS Phone Scam

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A 74-year-old woman who works in Darien got a phone call from a man pretending to be an IRS agent, and within hours \$1,000 was taken from her.

The case involves a common telephone scam in which the caller is told to immediately pay money through a wire transfer or gift card or some dire result will take place — in this case, that she would be arrested for lack of a tax payment claimed by the scammer. Elderly people tend to be victimized by the scam more than others.

Darien police gave this account of the matter:

The woman, a New Haven resident who works at a house in Darien, had received a voice mail message about a month before from a "Paul Brown" who identified himself as an Internal Revenue Service official.

He claimed in the voice mail that the victim owed the government money and he told her to call 509-592-9796. (A Darien police officer later called that number and heard a recorded message from a woman stating "Thank you for calling the Internal Revenue Service. All of our offices are busy. Please leave a voice mail. We will get back to you as soon as possible." The call was not returned.

An online search for that number showed numerous reports of scams associated with it.

On June 19, while the woman was at work she received another phone call from the same number, and she answered it. It was "Paul Brown" again, who said she owed the government \$1,000 in penalties to the IRS. He told her she had to pay that amount immediately or police would be sent to arrest her. She agreed to pay.

The scammer instructed her not to hang up, but instead to keep the line open as she followed steps to make the payment (a common demand from phone scammers). In this case, she was told to put the phone in her pocket when making the transaction.

She was told to go to Walgreens in Darien and buy two \$500 iTunes gift cards. The caller told her not to mention the IRS if asked what the gift cards were for.

When she had bought the cards, the caller instructed her to read him the numbers on the back of the card, which she did.

He then thanked her and hung up. His thanks were all she got.

The woman later told her son about the experience, and he told her she had been scammed and should call police.

Darien police told her that the IRS does not call taxpayers and threaten arrests; nor does it accept gift cards as payment.

It's a Longstanding Problem

Here are some tips that can help identify the IRS phone scam:

- [Darien Police: How to Avoid Being Victimized by IRS Phone Scams](#) (July 8, 2015)
- [Another Darien police announcement with tips to avoid IRS phone scams](#) (Nov. 10, 2015)

An example of a previous Darien victim of the IRS phone scam:

- [Darien Woman Loses \\$2,400 to Phone Scammer Who Said She Owed IRS](#) (July 13, 2015)

More articles about phone scams in Darien:

- [Someone Attempts to Pull off Kidnapping Phone Scam on a Darien Parent](#) (March 3)
- [Phone Scammers Call the Wrong Guy](#) (May 18)