

Darien Man, 61, Loses \$780 After Caller Terrorizes Him with Kidnapping Phone Scam

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A 61-year-old Darien man got some relief when he eventually was able to get in touch with his daughter, but by then he'd already paid out \$780 to a caller who victimized him with a phony kidnapping scam.

The scam has victimized or nearly victimized other residents in town, and Darien police and others have warned the public about it.

Police described what happened with this account:

On Thursday, Feb. 8, a Noroton resident told a police officer that he had just wired \$780 to an unknown

caller who told him that his daughter was involved in a car accident, that the caller had assaulted her and that if the father didn't wire money, he'd never see his daughter again.

(With minor variations, all of these elements are often in the story phony-kidnapping scammers tell their victims — see the sidebar article below.)

The man wasn't able to confirm that his daughter wasn't in any danger, and he feared for her safety. so he followed the caller's demands to wire money.

After the call with the scammer was over, the man was able to contact his daughter and learned she hadn't been in any danger. He spoke to police at 6:47 p.m. to report the crime.

Police are continuing to investigate. In previous cases, both the calls and the wire transfers were untraceable.

Some past cases in Darien:

- [Phone Scam About a Fake Ransom Targets Darien Woman](#) (Jan. 31)
- [Someone Attempts to Pull off Kidnapping Phone Scam on a Darien Parent](#) (March 31 2016)

Cases elsewhere, and descriptions of the scam:

- "What do the towns and cities of Easton, Monroe, Ansonia, Seymour and Darien have in common? All their police departments have recently issued warnings to residents about a kidnapping phone scam frequenting the area." — [Connecticut Post, Feb. 10](#)
- "The FBI is out with a new warning about an increase in [fake kidnapping calls](#)." — [CBS This Morning, Oct. 16, 2017](#)
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"Between 2013 and 2015, investigators in the FBI's Los Angeles Division were tracking virtual kidnapping calls from Mexico—almost all of these schemes originate from within Mexican prisons. The calls targeted specific individuals who were Spanish speakers. A majority of the victims were from the Los Angeles and Houston areas. "In 2015, the calls started coming in English," ... — [FBI website, Oct. 16, 2017](#)

SIDEBAR:

Darien Police: Don't Fall for the Phony-Kidnapping Scam

In 2016, after one of the scheme's failed, Darien police issued [this advice](#):

Daily phone scam attempts targeting residents of Darien and surrounding towns continue to occur at an alarming rate. This morning a town resident and parent of a Darien High School student unfortunately became the target of a very real scam that we've seen and heard about regularly.

Although law enforcement agencies around the country feel that these incidents have been originating outside of the U.S. for the past few years, the Darien Police Department investigates each occurrence. This agency has issued numerous advisories in the past, however the warnings in some instances go unnoticed.

This morning's incident involved an unsuspecting and loving parent who was not aware that this type of scam occurs in our area every day. The below scenario explains how the typical attempt can unfold:

Imagine going about your daily routine when suddenly you receive a phone call that shatters your existence. A voice on the other line informs you that they have kidnapped your child. Panicked, you unwittingly provide the very details needed to pull off this scam.

Your "child" is now being held against their will and the caller demands payment for your child's safe return. The caller instructs you to stay on the phone and warns you not to contact the police (They know if you hang up, you will most likely call your loved one and verify their safety). They then direct you to get in your car and drive directly to an ATM.

To gain your total cooperation, the caller may go so far as to threaten your child with torture. In today's incident, someone in the background could be heard crying. You then are directed to withdraw a large sum of money, perhaps \$800.

Once you have the cash, the caller directs you to meet them at a nearby retail location. They claim that they will release your child, but the kidnappers don't show up. Instead, the game changes and they instruct you to wire the money. Once this financial transaction is complete, the phone goes dead.

Frantically, you attempt to call back the number. There is no answer and no way to leave a voicemail. You decide to risk calling to verify if your child is where he or she should be even though the kidnappers told you not to.

When you call, you quickly are able to confirm that your child is safe and they were never in danger. Thankfully, the parent today was able to confirm their child's safety while still on the phone with dispatchers. The "would be" victim did not sustain any financial loss.

This sickening tactic preys on parents' worst fears. It is understandable why people cooperate, especially when the ransom price is relatively low. Although parents are relieved when they learn that their loved one is safe, their money will likely never be recovered.

Here's what to do:

—**Do** memorize or keep a written list of family cell phone numbers that can be easily accessed if your cell phone is in use.

—**Do not** provide family information over the telephone. Simply responding to a simple question like “Do you have a daughter?” can trigger a kidnapping scam.

—**Do** attempt to identify the location of the caller as well as the family member that has purportedly been kidnapped. The scammer may be unfamiliar with the local area.

—**Do** ask specific questions to assess the validity of the call. Asking the hostage to describe your family member may prompt the caller to stop the scam and hang up.

—**Do** notify the local police as soon as possible, even when instructed not to.

—**Do** save the incoming telephone number along with any text messages, voicemails, or photographs sent by the caller.

—**Do not** panic; this scam feeds on fear. By remaining calm and rational, you may be able to figure out that the call is a hoax.

Be Smart. Be Safe