

Phone Scam About a Fake Ransom Targets Darien Woman

Author : David Gurliacci

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A Darien woman almost became the victim of a phone scammer who demanded money Wednesday morning after telling her that her husband was being held for ransom, Darien police said.

Police described what happened with this account:

The caller told the woman that her husband had been in a car accident, along with the caller's brother, who is a wanted felon and therefore wouldn't call police.

The caller demanded that the woman stay on the phone while heading to a bank to get money that would be transferred to the caller and his brother. Otherwise, the man threatened, the woman's husband would be killed.

On the way to a bank in town, the woman flagged down two Darien police officers. The officers "immediately recognized that the details provided sounded identical to scams that have targeted our area in the past," the police announcement said.

The caller told the woman to head to Walmart to make the transfer. But the officers were able to determine where the husband was and, with the help of another, unnamed law enforcement agency, police met with him and confirmed he was safe.

So the woman hung up and never paid any money.

Police gave this additional information about the ransom phone scam:

There are many variations to this type of phone scam and unfortunately it is often successful because it preys on a person's fear of a loved one being harmed. Although the victims are relieved when they learn that their loved one is safe, their money will likely never be recovered.

How To Avoid Becoming A Victim

- 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 know where your husband is?" 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 try to buy time by repeating the caller's request and tell them you are writing down the demand, or tell the caller you need time to get things moving.
- Do not wire any funds for a "ransom." These transactions are very difficult to trace and upon completion are considered a loss.
- 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.