

Someone Attempts to Pull off Kidnapping Phone Scam on a Darien Parent

Author : David Gurliacci

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Date : March 3, 2016



A Darien parent on Thursday got a call from someone claiming to have captured the parent's child, and someone could even be heard crying in the background, police said.

The caller wanted money wired immediately, as is typical with phone scams.

According to police, the parent was able to confirm that the child was all right even though the purported kidnapper was still on the phone, so no money was lost.

Darien police issued this news release describing how these kinds of scams work and how you can thwart them:

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 Is 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.

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- **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