

Blessing Scam



Seniors with deep religious or spiritual beliefs, particularly those in immigrant communities, should be aware of a hoax that exploits those ideas and can result in the loss of cash and valuables.

The Blessing Scam is a con in which an elderly person is promised a blessing or spiritual healing by putting valuable items and cash in a bag which is then secretly swapped for an empty bag. The scam is particularly prevalent in the Chinese community.

Fraudsters working in a group will pretend to not know each other and befriend and sometimes corner the victim. They will ask personal questions which they then secretly transmit to a so-called spiritual doctor or psychic. The supposed spiritual advisor will then casually show up and use the information gathered to convince the senior of his or her psychic abilities.

The crook will then convince the victim that a terrible misfortune awaits the senior or a family member, unless a blessing ceremony is performed. In one recent case, a senior put more than \$70,000 in cash and jewelry in a bag for a blessing. The scammers switched out the bag and instructed her not to open it for two days so the blessing would work. When the senior opened the bag she discovered it was full of pieces of newspaper.

Helpful Tips

- Talk to family members before agreeing to any spiritual help which involves providing valuables or personal information
- If anyone approaches offering to bless items or warns of impending doom, leave immediately and call police
- Travel with someone whenever possible and keep a lookout for people unusually interested in getting to know you

If you or someone you know has been the victim of a scam, please **contact your local law enforcement agency.**



Jackie Lacey
District Attorney

Los Angeles County
District Attorney's Office
<http://da.lacounty.gov>

  @LADAOoffice