

# Virtual Kidnapping Scam



**W**hen someone calls claiming to have kidnapped a loved one, the first instinct may be to immediately send whatever ransom is demanded. But be careful – it could be a trick.

In the Virtual Kidnapping Scam, fraudsters call random phone numbers, often looking to target seniors.

When the victim answers the phone, the callers say they are kidnappers and screams can be heard in the background. The victim often blurts out a relative's name, believing that person to be the one screaming, and the scammers confirm it.

The supposed kidnappers instruct the victim to wire money directly to them. They also may demand that the victim purchase a gift card and provide the card number so the impostors can redeem its value. After getting the transfer or gift card numbers, the scammers hang up.

Because the victim is instructed to stay on the phone the entire time, the victim is unable to call anyone to verify the relative's whereabouts or call the police.

To learn about other frauds, visit <http://da.lacounty.gov/community/fraud-alerts>

## Helpful Tips

- Hang up the phone.
- Attempt to reach the alleged kidnap victim on his or her own phone.
- Do not pay a ransom by any means, including a wire transfer, gift card or in person.

**IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS BEEN THE VICTIM OF A SCAM, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY.**



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