



# CANADIAN ANTI-FRAUD CENTRE BULLETIN

Emergency/Grandparent Scams

2023-02-06

FRAUD: RECOGNIZE, REJECT, REPORT

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (CAFC), Ontario Provincial Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police are launching a fraud prevention campaign to raise awareness about the significant increase in emergency scams targeting Canadian seniors.

Emergency scams sometimes called grandparent scams, involve fraudsters contacting seniors or family members claiming that their grandchild or a loved one was in an accident, charged with an offence such as a DUI and drug offences or, in some cases, is ill with COVID-19. Fraudsters will claim that they are law enforcement officials, lawyers and even impersonate the grandchild/loved one. They'll proceed to advise the victim that a payment for bail or fine is required immediately in order for the family member to avoid going to jail. Fraudsters will often claim that there is a "gag order" and the victim cannot discuss the occurrence with anyone. If the victim agrees to pay the requested amount, suspects will arrange to pick up the funds in person or will ask the victim to send cash in the mail.

Another variation the CAFC continues to receive reports of is the emergency scam email. Victims report receiving an email claiming to come from one of their email contacts. The email will ask for a favor: purchase gift cards because they're ill or have lost their wallet. In some cases, the sender's email account has been compromised or contact list has been obtained by the fraudsters.

## **New variation of an emergency scam:**

The CAFC is receiving reports about a fraudulent emergency text or social media message. The fraudster will claim to be a family member or loved one advising that their cellphone is broken or has been dropped in water. The fraudster will then provide an alternate phone number to send a text. The fraudster will proceed to ask for a favor by requesting funds from the victim to repair the broken phone or to pay a bill.

## **Warning Signs - How to protect yourself**

- If you receive a suspicious phone call claiming to be from a family member in an emergency situation, hang up the phone and contact them directly on the number you have in your contact list.
- If the caller claims to be a law enforcement official and asked you to pay a fine or bail, hang up and call your police directly.
- Listen to that inner voice that is screaming at you: "This doesn't sound right".
- Be careful what you post online. Scammers can use details shared on social media platforms and dating sites for targeting purposes. Suspects can easily gather names and details about your loved ones.



Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
Gendarmerie royale du Canada



Competition Bureau  
Canada  
Bureau de la concurrence  
Canada



Ontario Provincial Police

Canada

- Be suspicious of telephone calls that require you to immediately take action and request bail money for a family member in distress.
- Be careful with caller ID numbers that look familiar. Scammers use technology to disguise the actual number they are calling from (spoof) and make it appear as a trusted phone number.
- If you receive an email or text message claiming to be from a friend or loved one asking for money, make the outgoing call to the person by looking up the legitimate phone number you have for them in your contact list.
- Use unique and strong passwords for all social media and email accounts.

Anyone who suspects they have been the victim of cybercrime or fraud should report it to their local police and to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre's [online reporting system](#) or by phone at 1-888-495-8501. If not a victim, report it to the CAFC anyway.