



Every year, citizens of Winnebago County lose thousands of dollars to the activities of scammers who bombard us with online, mail, door-to-door and telephone scams. The Winnebago County Sheriff's Office has seen the devastating effects scams can have on people and their families. One of the best ways to combat this kind of fraud is to help you take measures to prevent yourself from becoming a victim.

## **Follow these top 10 tips to protect yourself!**

- 1. Watch out for scams-** scammers target you anytime, anywhere, anyhow.
- 2. Don't Respond-** ignore suspicious emails, letters, house visits, phone calls or SMS messages- press 'delete', throw them out, shut the door or just hang up.
- 3. Don't agree to an offer right away-** do your research and seek independent advice if it involves significant money, time or commitment, and get the offer in writing.
- 4. Ask yourself who you're dealing with-** scammers pose as people or organizations that you know and trust.
- 5. Don't let scammers push your buttons-** scammers will play on your emotions to get what they want, including adopting a personal touch.
- 6. Keep your computer secure-** always update your firewall, anti-virus and anti-spyware software, and only buy from a verified source.
- 7. Only pay online using a secure payment service-** look for a URL starting with 'https' and a closed padlock symbol.
- 8. Never send money to someone you don't know and trust-** it's rare to recover money from a scammer.
- 9. Protect your identity-** your personal details are private and invaluable; keep them that way and away from scammers.
- 10. If you've spotted a scam, spread the word!-** tell your family and friends, and report it to the Federal Trade.

## **If you did not fall victim to a scam**

1. Contact Deputy Peter Ehlert at [pehlert@co.winnebago.wi.us](mailto:pehlert@co.winnebago.wi.us) with information about the attempted scam. This will aid us in advising the community of potential scams targeting Winnebago County.
2. Share this information with family and friends.

## **Most Recent Scams in Winnebago County....**

### **Impersonating a Police Officer Scam**

Winnebago County has recently been experiencing calls regarding an individual impersonating a Sheriff's Deputy.

The individual calling will identify him/herself as a Deputy with the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office and inform you that there is a warrant out for your arrest and that if you do not satisfy the warrant immediately with them, Deputies will respond to your residence and place you under arrest. **THIS IS A SCAM!** Please do not respond to these individuals, as the Sheriff's Office would never call you on the phone and ask for money.

### **IRS Scam Alert**

The Winnebago County Sheriff's Office has recently taken numerous reports of a caller alleging to be an agent of the Internal Revenue Service. During the conversation, the caller will explain that the recipient owes the IRS money, and will threaten a negative outcome if this isn't paid immediately.

This is a scam! Please do not respond to these threats. If you receive correspondence from the government, it will come through official correspondence, or a phone call in which they are not requesting any personal information from you. If you are contacted by someone representing themselves from the IRS and are uncertain if it is a scam, ask to set up an official meeting at a local IRS office to address the issues at hand.

Please share this information with family and friends so they can avoid any potential victimization. Should you receive any of this questionable communication please contact local law enforcement immediately!

### **WE Energies Scam Alert**

Just recently, law enforcement agencies in Northeast Wisconsin have received reports of victims receiving calls from someone representing WE Energies. The caller will say that they have been trying to get in touch with the victim for several weeks regarding unpaid bills, and if the bills are not paid by a specific time later that day, their utility services will be disconnected. The caller then instructs the victim to purchase a pre-paid debit card and call them back and provide the debit card numbers.

The scammers appear to be making these calls from locations outside of the United States and the victims often report the callers have a foreign accent. The scammers also have made audio recordings of a WE Energy customer service greeting and ask the victim to call a specific number for verification that the caller (the scammer) is in fact from We Energy. Similar scams have been reported targeting Cable TV services as well. If you receive a phone call from any service provider, please contact the utility company directly and DO NOT purchase the pre-paid debit cards or give any personal information over the phone unless you initiate the call. Also, report any such activity to your local law enforcement agency.