

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Alert: Scammers Cloning VI Cellphone Numbers And Using Them To Steal Money, V.I.P.D. Says

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A new scam the Virgin Islands Police Department says is affecting the territory's economy sees scammers cloning the cellphone numbers of residents by using a scanner, which is able to capture the serial number of a phone and through it the phone holder's identity. The scammer then uses the phone holder's identity to steal money. According to the V.I.P.D., the scam is prevalent in the territory.

"We have seen a large increase in phone cloning scams used to request funds, iTunes cards, and phone cards," the V.I.P.D. said. "The scammers solicit persons by cloning their telephones using a scanner to retrieve their electronic serial number and their phones' identification number. This allows the scammer to clone the victim's phone and

review their contact history displayed in the victim's telephone."

The V.I.P.D. added, "This then gives the scammers access to communicate over the telephone or through text messages using the victim's phone number once the cloning is completed. When the scammer communicates over the telephone, it is very brief, and they act like the owners of the telephone number being displayed to family members, and then request funds, iTunes cards, or telephone cards. When the scammers communicate through text messages they act like the owner [as well]. This criminal activity is currently affecting our economy."

The V.I.P.D. said it's asking the community to avoid answering any phone calls from numbers that appear suspicious, and to avoid providing personal information over the phone or through text message even if the telephone number appears to be an individual that you may know.

"Do not wire or send funds through Western Union or Money Gram to individuals because they [claim to be] sick or to win any funds," the V.I.P.D. said. "Check your phone bills to verify that no calls are being made from out of our territory. Keep your phone with you at all times, turn off Bluetooth and WiFi when not in use, clear browsing history and cookies regularly, use security applications to keep the phone protected, stay away from using unfamiliar WIFI access, and vet application before installing them," the police force said.

The V.I.P.D. is calling on residents to spread the word. And if you believe that you've fallen victim to the scam, call the V.I.P.D.'s Economic Crime Unit on St. Croix at 340-778-1001, or St. Thomas at 340-774-3942. You may also contact Crime Stoppers USVI with anonymous tip [here](#).