

The Virgin Islands Consortium

New Scam is Requesting Victims Return Call or Risk Arrest

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Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA) Commissioner Richard Evangelista said Wednesday he received a robotic call stating there is pending legal action against him, and that failure to return the call to discuss the matter may result in the issuance of an arrest warrant.

"If you receive a similar call, it is likely a scam. Hang up or do not respond. If someone mentions there is a warrant out for your arrest, DLCA encourages the public to report the call to the Virgin Islands Police Department Economic Crime Bureau," DLCA said in its release.

The department said crooks use clever schemes to defraud millions of people every year. They often combine new technology with old tricks to get people to send money or give out personal information.

Here are 10 practical tips from the Federal Trade Commission to help you stay a step ahead:

- Spot imposters. Scammers often pretend to be someone you trust, like a government official, a family member, a charity, or a company you do business with. Don't send money or give out personal information in response to an unexpected request — whether it comes as a text, a phone call, or an email.
- Do online searches. Type a company or product name into your favorite search engine with words like "review," "complaint" or "scam." Or search for a phrase that describes your situation, like "IRS call." You can even search for phone numbers to see if other people have reported them as scams.
- Don't believe your caller ID. Technology makes it easy for scammers to fake caller ID information, so the name and number you see aren't always real. If someone calls asking for money or personal information, hang up. If you think the caller might be telling the truth, call back to a number you know is genuine.
- Don't pay upfront for a promise. Someone might ask you to pay in advance for things like debt relief, credit and loan offers, mortgage assistance, or a job. They might even say you've won a prize, but first you have to pay taxes or fees. If you do, they will probably take the money and disappear.
- Consider how you pay. Credit cards have significant fraud protection built in, but some payment methods don't. Wiring money through services like Western Union or MoneyGram is risky because it's nearly impossible to get your money back. That's also true for reloadable cards (like MoneyPak or Reloadit) and gift cards (like iTunes or Google Play). Government offices and honest companies won't require you to use these payment methods.
- Talk to someone. Before you give up your money or personal information, talk to someone you trust. Con artists want you to make decisions in a hurry. They might even threaten you. Slow down, check out the story, do an online search, consult an expert — or just tell a friend.
- Hang up on robocalls. If you answer the phone and hear a recorded sales pitch, hang up and report it to the FTC. These calls are illegal, and often the products are bogus. Don't press 1 to speak to a person or to be taken off the list. That could lead to more calls.
- Be skeptical about free trial offers. Some companies use free trials to sign you up for products and bill you every month until you cancel. Before you agree to a free trial, research the company and read the cancellation policy. And always review your monthly statements for charges you don't recognize.
- Don't deposit a check and wire money back. By law, banks must make funds from deposited checks available within days, but uncovering a fake check can take weeks. If a check you deposit turns out to be a fake, you're responsible for repaying the bank.
- Sign up for free scam alerts from the FTC at ftc.gov/scams. Get the latest tips and advice about scams sent right to your inbox

There are many ways consumers can report a scam. You can contact DLCA hotlines at (340) 771-SCAM(7226) or (340) 727-SCAM(7226) or via email to consumerawareness@dlca.vi.gov.

You may also report scams at ftc.gov/complaint. Your reports help the FTC and other law enforcement investigate scams and bring crooks to justice.

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