



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

---

October 2013

Dating back to Ancient Greece with the shell game, criminals have been swindling victims out of their money for centuries. As technology has advanced, so have the cons and tricks. Instead of an overturned box with three walnut shells and a pebble, criminals use the telephone, internet, and mail to unleash sophisticated scams on unsuspecting citizens.

As your District Attorney, I am incensed and infuriated with type of individual who would prey on people's vulnerabilities, sometimes wiping out life savings and move on gleefully to the next victim. My Financial Crimes Division is comprised of a seven highly trained attorneys who prosecute real estate fraud, white collar crime, workers' compensation fraud, welfare fraud, and consumer fraud. Within the Bureau of Investigations, that Financial Crimes Division is comprised of 17 criminal investigators who not only aggressively investigate all forms of fraud, they conduct outreach and training for citizens, law enforcement, and businesses in a concentrated effort to reduce the threat of becoming the victim of a fraud or scam.

The most desirable demographic for a criminal to attempt to dupe, fleece, trick, and swindle is our senior citizens. Playing the percentages and generalities, the criminal believes this vulnerable population has available savings and is easier to confuse. It is an absolute misnomer to believe that a criminal preys upon the victim's greed. Often our senior citizens believe they are contributing to a charity, when in reality they are lining the pockets of a criminal.

If you often give to a particular charity, for instance one having to do with cancer research, expect to see a multitude of solicitations in your mail for related causes. Some are legitimate, others are counterfeit. With a computer and copy machine anyone can design a letter to appear to have originated from a legitimate foundation or company. If you have any doubts, please bring the document to your local police agency or my office. It is well worth our time to prevent a fraud or scam from occurring.

Scams tend to roll through our community in waves. As soon as you hear of a sweepstakes scam or the infamous Nigerian prince internet scam, the criminals have moved on to another target or have altered their methods. In an effort to keep Tulare County citizens informed and prepared for the latest scam, beginning November 1st, our website [www.da-tulareco.org](http://www.da-tulareco.org) will have a scam alert section. We will also address tips to avoid becoming a victim to fraud and/or a scam.

You will find more extensive information on our website; however I want to leave you with some general rules and tips. Scammers often use the telephone to solicit potential victims.

Check your caller identification and only answer the phone when you recognize the number. Do no business over the phone and never give out your Social Security number, medical insurance information, or bank account numbers over the phone. No legitimate company would ask you for that information telephonically. With a telephone scam you always have the power to hang up the phone. And lastly, remember the old saying, "if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!"

If belong to an organization that would benefit from training in frauds and scams, please do not hesitate to contact my office (559) 636-5410.

Tim Ward  
District Attorney