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NEWS RELEASE

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Consumer Scams Alert

Targets: Senior Citizens and Spanish-speaking Consumers

Milwaukee, WI – The Sheriff's Office is alerting citizens of several recent phone scams announced by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). (For more information: <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/>).

In the first instance, fake IRS collectors are calling consumers claiming they owe taxes. The caller demands a prepaid debit card, wire transfer or credit card number for payment. If the person does not comply with the demand, the caller threatens to arrest or deport them, or take away their driver's license or business.

The most recent scam noted by the FTC, targets the Spanish-speaking population. An FTC lawsuit states merchandise advertised on Spanish-language television commercials, including a weight loss belt, English-language courses, clothing and cell phones by Hispanic Global Way, was found to be defective or not as advertised. Customers were subsequently denied refunds.

The FTC says thousands of victims have lost money to these scams, and offers the following ways to recognize and foil their attempts to steal your money:

Helpful information from the FTC website:

These scammers often:

- Call you. But when the IRS contacts people about unpaid taxes, they do it by postal mail, not by phone
- Use common names and fake IRS badge numbers and know the last four digits of your Social Security number
- Demand payment via a prepaid debit card or wire transfer. The IRS doesn't ask for either of these payment methods, nor will they ask for credit card numbers.
- Rig caller ID information to appear as if the IRS really is calling or send fake emails that look like legitimate IRS correspondence
- Make a second call claiming to be the police or department of motor vehicles, rigging the caller ID information

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To protect yourself from imposters who call, claiming to be from the IRS:

- Don't provide any account or other personal information. Hang up the phone.
- [Never wire money](#) to a person or company you don't know. Once you wire money, you can't get it back.
- If you owe - or think you owe - federal taxes, call the IRS at 800-829-1040. IRS workers can help you with your payment questions. You also can visit the IRS website at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov).
- If you've already paid your taxes, call and report the incident to 800-366-4484.
- Forward emails from the IRS to phishing@irs.gov. Don't open any attachments or click on any links in those emails.
- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at [ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint). Include "IRS Telephone Scam" in your complaint.

To protect yourself in the case of phone orders on televised commercials:

- **Research any company before ordering its products.** Even if a company advertises on national TV, it pays to check it out. Enter the company's name in an online search engine with terms like "scam," "complaint," or "review."
- **Know a company's refund or exchange policy upfront.** Before you order any product over the phone, ask the company for their policies and terms in writing, including any additional charges or fees you might incur. If the terms aren't clearly spelled out, it could be sign of a scam.

If you ordered a product:

- **Report companies that ask you to pay for their mistake.** If a company sends you a defective, incomplete product – or one that you didn't order – and then asks you to pay for their oversight when you ask for a refund or exchange, it's a red flag. You don't have to pay to get *their* mistake right. [Report them to the FTC](#).
- **Don't put up with intimidation, threats of deportation or lawsuits, or other forms of harassment.** Legitimate companies don't threaten or insult consumers, and will not harass you for money.

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