

For Immediate Release

Contact: F. Barry Wilkes, Liberty County Clerk of Courts

JURY SCAM HITS LIBERTY COUNTY

A jury duty scam has hit Liberty County.

According to Liberty County Clerk of Courts F. Barry Wilkes, an unidentified company is calling residents of Liberty County posing as an officer of the local court system. The caller says, "You failed to report for jury duty and a warrant is out for your arrest." When residents respond that they never received a jury summons or notice to appear in court, the caller tells them that, in order to avoid being fined or incarcerated, the resident needs to provide "some information for 'verification purposes', which includes your birth date, social security number, and even a credit card number.

"This is when you should hang up the phone," Wilkes advises, "because it's a scam used to obtain information from you for fraudulent purposes and to bilk you through credit card and financial transaction fraud."

Wilkes explains, "My staff and I and employees of the Liberty County Sheriff Steve Sikes' office regularly contact jurors concerning jury duty but, we never ask potential jurors to provide confidential information over the phone for identification purposes. If you receive a call from anyone who says he or she works for this office or the Sheriff's Office and the caller asks you to provide confidential information for verification purposes or otherwise, note the caller's phone number, hang up the phone and do not talk to them. Immediately call the Sheriff's Office at 912-876-2131 and report that you received a call from someone trying to exact confidential information from you for suspected fraudulent purposes. Under no circumstances," he warned, "should you give out personal or credit card information to anyone during an unsolicited phone call."

According to the Federal Bureau of Information, jury scams have been around for years but there has recently been resurgence. Communities in more than a dozen states have issued public warnings about cold calls from people claiming to be court officials seeking personal information. As a rule, court officers never ask for confidential information over the phone but, instead, generally correspond with prospective jurors via mail.

The scam's bold simplicity may be what makes it so effective. Facing the unexpected threat of arrest, victims are caught off guard and may be quick to part with some information to defuse the situation.

"They get you scared first," says a special agent in the FBI's Minneapolis field office. "They get people saying, 'Oh my gosh! I'm not a criminal. What's

going on?" That's when the scammer dangles a solution that will clear up the problem--a fine, payable by credit card.

With enough information, scammers can assume your identity and empty your bank accounts.

"It seems like a very simple scam," the agent adds. The trick is putting people on the defensive, then reeling them back in with the promise of a clean slate. "It's kind of ingenious. It's social engineering."

More Information

 **Want to learn more about new and common scams like this one? Then sign up for FBI e-mail alerts by going to: <http://www.fbi.gov/e-mail-updates>**