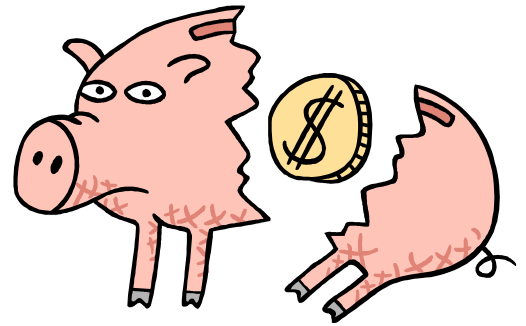











SACRAMENTO SENIORS, SCAMS, AND FRAUD













According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 1 in 6 Americans fall victim to fraud every year. Unfortunately, our elderly citizens are those most likely to be scammed, oftentimes losing their entire life savings. Whether it is an unscrupulous salesperson overcharging for auto repairs, or a dishonest caretaker stealing the social security number of an elder in their care, con-artists share the same goal: taking advantage of a senior to steal their money or possessions.

-  **The FBI claims that Americans lose over \$40 billion each year to telemarketing fraud.** Over half of these victims are elderly.
-  **Seniors are prime targets of fraud.** Fraudulent companies, unscrupulous salespeople, and professional con-artists specifically target older adults because of their likeliness to have cash reserves on hand, their vulnerability to high pressure sales tactics, and willingness to help those in need.
-  **Women 70+ years, who live alone, are specifically targeted for scam operations.** Most at risk are those whose husbands traditionally handled household bills, repairs, and other business.
-  **Most older victims are well educated, socially active, and have above average incomes.**
-  Elderly victimization through **economic exploitation and fraud** by friends, family members, or strangers is **ELDER ABUSE and is against the law.**
-  **The concept of crime victimization is new to many seniors** who lived in an era where doors did not have to be locked and preying on vulnerable citizens was shameful.
-  **Elder fraud is difficult to prosecute because victims are oftentimes ashamed for not recognizing the scam.** As a result, they do not tell anyone and the crime goes unreported.
-  **The loss of money, life savings, or home, can be devastating for an elderly person** when their independence is suddenly and cruelly stolen from them.
-  **Identity theft is the fastest growing crime in the United States.**









Senior Scams are PREVENTABLE, and YOU can make a difference to stop a senior from becoming a victim!

CONSUMERS' RIGHTS: WHAT EVERY SENIOR SHOULD KNOW

-  **When contacted by a telemarketer, ask to be placed on their “DO NOT CALL” list.** It is illegal for them to contact you again.
-  **Individuals can request their personal information to not be sold to legitimate companies.**
-  **Before donating money, legitimate charities and investment companies can be verified with government agencies and consumer protection organizations.**
-  **Upon request, companies and persons who you do business with must present references and current licensing information.**
-  **Consumers have 3 days to cancel a contract,** such as with a contractor or magazine subscription.
-  **Repairs or changes that are not needed or wanted do not have to be authorized.**
-  **Dishonest businesses and sales persons can be reported to consumer protection agencies and state licensing officials** (see pages 7-8).
-  **When winning a prize, the recipient cannot be charged for fees, shipping and handling, taxes, or postage, or required to listen to a sales promotion to receive the item won.**
-  **Items received in the mail that were not ordered are free.** The recipient cannot be charged for unordered products.
-  **For credit card purchases via telephone, consumers have 60 days to protest a charge** and request a credit to their account if the products were not ordered, received, or falsely advertised.

WARNING SIGNS THAT A SENIOR MAY BE A VICTIM OF FRAUD OR A TARGET OF A SCAM ARTIST



-  **Unfamiliar persons loitering near banks, ATMs, or shopping centers, and/or persons approaching seniors and asking for charitable donations or to borrow money.**
-  **Door to door salespersons peddling home repairs or other products and services in your neighborhood.**
-  **Strangers or unfamiliar persons spending time in or around the home of a senior or with an elderly neighbor.**
-  **A caregiver, family member, or new acquaintance attempting to isolate a senior.**
-  **A large amount of mail lying around, advertising offers such as free prizes, investment opportunities, or charitable solicitations.**
-  **Frequent calls from strangers or stop-by courier services.**
-  **Repeated or large payments to out-of-state businesses.**
-  **Changes such as secretive and nervous behavior, weight loss, irritability, and insomnia.**


TIPS TO STAYING SAFE AND PROTECTING PERSONAL INFORMATION

Share these important tips with your elderly neighbors to prevent them from being victimized by fraud. Most importantly, protect personal information! Do not give out social security numbers to anyone, even for identification purposes. Also, do not give credit card or driver's license numbers, Medi-Care I.D.s, bank account information, or any familial information to anyone except reputable companies that one has been doing business with. Safeguard all materials containing this information, such as Medi-Care letters, credit card bills, bank statements, and grocery receipts. Before disposing, destroy those portions containing personal information.

 **Never carry social security numbers in a wallet or purse!**

 **Do not let salespeople or strangers into your home.**

 **Do not make withdrawals or give ANY money at the request of strangers or new acquaintances NO MATTER WHAT THE REASON!**

 **Do not send cash, check, or money order by courier, overnight delivery, or wire transfer to anyone who insists on immediate delivery or to an unfamiliar company or person.**


 **Check caregivers' references carefully.**

 **Select only a licensed, insured, qualified contractor.**

Do not rush into any repairs, even when told it is an "emergency."

Get at least three written bids on the project and references for each contractor.

Do not sign anything that you do not understand and never pay in cash.


 **Request your name, address, and phone number to be removed from direct mail and telemarketing lists, so that personal information will not be sold to legitimate companies.**

 **Before buying any products, donating or investing, ask for written information about the offer and how financial contributions will be used.**

Discuss ideas with close friends and family members, and check the background of the organization with the appropriate government agencies and consumer protection organizations. Only do business with reputable companies.

 **Carefully review and protect incoming and outgoing mail:**

- Be alert of missing mail when expecting to receive new credit cards, checks, or credit card and bank account statements. Know the dates that they should arrive.
- Use locked mailboxes or those with a slot into the house, and do not leave outgoing mail clipped to the mailbox or front door.
- Do not leave mail in blue post office mailboxes over night.

 **Ask friends or relatives if they know anything about cars before getting repairs.** Listen carefully to the mechanic, and get a written estimate before starting work. NEVER leave a blank check to cover the cost of "necessary" repairs.

SENIOR SCAMS

The Department of Consumer Affairs claims that California's seniors are most commonly defrauded by bogus charities, contractor rip-offs, phony sweepstakes, and fraudulent telephone marketers. Con artists use a variety of methods to defraud their victims, contacting them by phone, mail, or in person, such as outside of a bank or shopping mall. They may be working on their own or for a fraudulent company, requesting personal financial information, a check by courier service, wire transfer of funds, a blank check to cover "necessary" repairs, checks written out to an individual rather than a business, or other such deceitful plots. Seniors should know their surroundings at all times and beware of the many scams targeting older adults.

Bogus charities

- Ask for contributions for a charitable cause, such as for orphaned children or disabled veterans
- Many use titles similar to a well-respected charity or include terms such as "firefighters" or "police"



Dishonest contractors and repair persons

- Examples include recommending expensive and unnecessary "emergency" repairs, overcharging for services, or charging for those never performed

Sweepstakes, prize promotions and offers, and Lottery Clubs

- Fraudulent contests without any winners, never entered by the victim
- Some instruct the victim to call to a 900 or 976 number and charge expensive rates to their phone bill
- Many require payment for taxes, shipping and handling or postage fees, or verification of identity with a credit card or social security number to receive the prize

Fraudulent Telemarketers

- Use bullying or charming, such as a single high-pressure call or a series of friendly calls to a lonely senior to trap unsuspecting victims in their plot
- They may be selling a product "today only," requesting a charitable donation for an "urgent" need, or other bogus scheme to steal a senior's money



Door to door scam artists

- Peddle all types of merchandise or services, such as lawn care, home repairs, household goods, magazine subscriptions, and others
- The victim may be asked to sign unnecessary or excessive service contracts
- Ask for payment in full, usually in cash or a check payable to an individual rather than a company, but the victim never receives the product or completed service
- The scam artist may be working with another person to survey an elder's home. While one gives the pitch, the other steals or plans future theft



Mail box tampering

- Stolen mail containing personal information, such as bank and credit card statements, checks, Social Security number, and Medi-care correspondence is used to gain access to finances or credit of a senior
- Examples include fraudulent credit card purchases, copied and forged checks to steal money from an elder's bank account, and many others



Investment fraud

- After investing hundreds of dollars to one's life savings, profits are never made and the scam artist disappears with the victim's money
- Includes multi-level marketing, work-at-home plans, pyramid schemes, chain letters, precious gems, high-risk securities, high-tech investments such as computer equipment, payphones, or ATMs, and many others

Recovery rooms

- These scam-artists charge a fee to recover a victim's money from a previous scam, yet the money is never recovered
- Victims of scams are placed on a "mooch list" of easy targets that is sold to other fraudulent companies and operations to scam victims again



Scam surfers

- Acquire personal information while the victim is writing out a deposit slip in a bank, using a credit card to make a purchase or phone call, or other transaction
- Use binoculars or video cameras in busy places such as airports or shopping malls

Identity Theft

- Personal information is stolen and used by the perpetrator to portray the victim in order to access their financial assets or to obtain credit cards, bank accounts, loans, property, etc.
The victim is left financially responsible for these purchases, oftentimes ruining their financial status and credit history and sometimes leaving them bankrupt

Caregiver scams














- An assistant, nurse, or housekeeper exploits an older person for financial gain or access to material possessions. This can also occur within the family unit, and is elder abuse
- Scams include:
 - Unauthorized use of ATM or credit cards, forged signatures on checks and money orders, theft of social security numbers and personal information, signing over of property and/or assets, personal use of social security and pension checks

Internet fraud

- The scam artist requests credit card numbers, social security numbers, or bank account information, and upon receiving it, they disappear
- Scams include bogus offers via email, fraudulent ads posted on bulletin boards, chat rooms and forums, including free travel packages, cell phones, high-return investments, and other seemingly attractive rewards



HOW TO HELP

-  Share information with neighborhood elderly about senior scams and how they can protect themselves.
-  Beware of door-to-door sales persons and unfamiliar persons in your neighborhood, or courier services frequenting the home of an elderly person. Report any suspicious activity to local law enforcement. Talk to seniors about scams and how to avoid becoming a victim.
-  Beware of caregivers or family members attempting to isolate an older person. Report elder abuse to Adult Protective Services (916-874-9377).
-  Maintain clear, open communication with seniors about any financial deals and warn them to not accept any offers from unsolicited calls or mail.
-  Advise seniors to prepare responses to telemarketing calls before they come:
 - “Please put me on your DO NOT CALL list.”
 - “I am not interested. Good-bye.”
-  Suggest that an older adult use direct deposit for social security and benefits checks, and that they use an electronic bill paying service. (Contact the financial institution for more information) Provide assistance in how to access these services.
-  Remind seniors to carry credit cards only when going to make a purchase. When canceling credit cards, contact the issuing company and close the account in addition to cutting up the cards.
-  Recommend that seniors write checks in red ink, making it less likely for scam artists to copy their signature.
-  Advise an elder to limit powers of attorney and to be careful when having an other person on their bank account.
-  Verify legitimate organizations seeking donations, investments, or business from an elderly person. (see pages 7-8)
-  Assist a senior in selecting a contractor. Be present in the home during repairs, and review any contracts before signage.
-  Assist an elderly person with simple home or car repairs. For those requiring professional assistance, check with the appropriate government agencies and Better Business Bureau on the legitimacy, credentials, and reputation of the business used.
-  Remind seniors to review their bank and credit card statements and other bills for suspicious activity.

Report any incidents or suspicions of fraud to law enforcement and consumer protection organizations.
(see pages 7-8)

WHO TO CALL TO REPORT ACTS OR SUSPICIONS OF FRAUD:

National Fraud Information Center (800) 876-7060
P.O. Box 65868 www.fraud.org
Washington, D.C. 20035

Sacramento Police Department (916) 264-5471
Report Writing (916) 264-5476
Financial Crimes (916) 264-5771
www.sacpd.org

Sacramento Sheriff's Department (916) 874-5115
Financial Crimes (916) 874-5070
Elder Abuse Bureau www.sacsheriff.com

Sacramento County District Attorney (916) 874-5701
901 G Street www.da.saccounty.net
Sacramento, CA 95814

Office of the Attorney General (916) 322-3360
Department of Justice www.caag.state.ca.us
Public Inquiry Unit
P.O. Box 944255
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550
(Send complaints in writing for all types of fraud)

U.S. Attorney General (800) 869-4499
Send complaints in writing to: www.usdoj.gov
U.S. Attorney's Office, 12th Floor
United States Court House
312 North Springs Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Attn: Citizen Complaint Unit

Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Justice
Investigations Division
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530
Also, report fraud by email: oig.hotline@usdoj.gov
(Complaints against abuse and fraud in federal programs, including Medicare/Medi-Cal Fraud)

Medicare/Medi-Cal Fraud Hotline (800) 447-8477

Social Security Administration Fraud Hotline
P.O. Box 17768 (800) 269-0271
Baltimore, MD 21235 www.ssa.gov
Also, report fraud by email: oig.hotline@ssa.gov

U.S. Postal Service (800) 275-8777
www.usps.gov

Better Business Bureau (916) 443-6843
400 S Street www.sacramento.bbb.org
Sacramento, CA 95814

Federal Trade Commission (877) 382-4357
Identity Theft Hotline (877) 438-4338
www.consumer.gov/knowfraud
www.ftc.gov

Consumer Response Center
Federal Trade Commission
CRC-240
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20588

Adult Protective Services (916) 874-9377
Senior and Adult Services Division
4875 Broadway
Sacramento, CA 95820-1500

Department of Consumer Affairs (800) 952-5210
400 R Street TDD (916) 322-1700
Sacramento, CA 95814 www.dca.ca.gov
(See White Pages under CONSUMER COMPLAINT AND PROTECTION COORDINATORS for business complaints)

Northern Case Management (916) 255-4041
Contractor's Case Management
(Complaints against a Contractor, or to verify licensing)

State of California (800) 927-4357
Department of Insurance www.insurance.ca.gov
Consumer Hotline
300 South Spring Street, South Tower
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance
4200 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 800 (703) 276-0100
Arlington, VA 22203-1804 www.give.org
(Complaints against charities)

AARP (916) 446-2277
980 9th Street www.aarp.org
Sacramento, CA 95814

Elderweb (309) 451-3319
1305 Chadwick Drive www.elderweb.com
Normal, IL 61761

National Consumers League (202) 835-3323
1701 K Street, NW www.nclnet.org
Washington, D.C. 20006
(For more information on Elder Scams and Fraud)

Senior Legal Hotline (916) 551-2140
515 12th Street (800) 222-1753
Sacramento, CA 95814 www.seniorlegalhotline.org

Internet Fraud Complaint Center www1.ifccfbi.gov

CHECK IT OUT!

To Verify Licensing Information

Contractors' State Licensing Board (800) 321-2752
(Complaints) www.cslb.ca.gov
10365 Old Placerville Road
Sacramento, CA

Department of Consumer Affairs (916) 445-1254
400 R Street (800) 952-5210
Sacramento, CA 95814 TDD (916) 322-1700
www.dca.ca.gov

Northern Case Management (916) 255-4041
Contractors Case Management

Bureau of Automotive Repair (916) 255-4300
Department of Consumer Affairs
10220 Systems Parkway, Suite D
Sacramento, CA 95827 www.autorepair.ca.gov

American Society of Travel Agents (703) 739-2782
1101 King Street, Suite 200 www.astanet.com
Alexandria, VA 22314
Email Complaints to: consumeraffairs@astahq.com

Before You Donate To An Unfamiliar Charity

Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance
4200 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 800 (703) 276-0100
Arlington, VA 22203-1804 www.give.org
(Phone number is the switchboard. Ask for the charity line)

Better Business Bureau (916) 443-6843
400 S Street www.sacramento.bbb.org
Sacramento, CA 95814

Office of the Attorney General (916) 445-2021
Registry of Charitable Trusts
Public Inquiry Unit www.ag.ca.gov/charities
P.O. Box 944255
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550

To Verify Investment Information

California Department of Corporations (866) 275-2677
www.corp.ca.gov
1515 K Street, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95814-4052

National Association of Securities Dealers (800) 289-9999
www.nasd.com
1735 K Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20006-1500

Securities and Exchange Commission (800) 732-0330
www.sec.org
SEC Complaint Center
450 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20549-0213

To stop telephone sales calls and direct mail solicitations from legitimate national marketers:

Direct Marketing Association

Telephone Preference/Mail Preference Services
P.O. Box 9014
Farmingdale, NY 11735-9014
(Send name, address, and phone number)



To remove information from lists sold to creditors, contact:

Equifax, Inc. (888) 5-OPT-OUT
Options
P.O. Box 740123
Atlanta, GA 30374-0123
(Requests can be made by phone or in writing. If in writing, send full name, address, Social Security Number, and signature)



Caring Neighborhoods Program
6005 Folsom Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95819
Tele: (916) 277-6009

Visit us on the internet!
www.caringneighborhoods.org
E-mail: tgray@cityofsacramento.org

