



HUMBOLDT COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE PAUL V. GALLEGOS • DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Re: CONSUMER ALERT-PHONE SCAM

Date: September 8, 2011

Contact: District Attorney Paul Gallegos

Phone: (707) 268-2571, (707) 267-4400

RE: Call Back Scam

The Humboldt County District Attorney's Office is warning residents after being alerted of a phone scam targeting people in Humboldt County.

At the recent Consumer Fraud Outreach Booth at the Humboldt County Fair, a Southern Humboldt resident reported recently being the target of a "Call Back" scam.

"This scam involves convincing the victim to unknowingly make overseas long distance calls that result in huge phone bills for the victim, with the proceeds somehow diverted to the scammer. There is no check, no exchange of personal identifying information, or anything "suspicious" that we normally see in scams," explained Humboldt County District Attorney's Office Investigator Wayne Cox. "The scam is in effect as soon as the victim dials the phone."

According to the resident, he received a call from someone claiming to be the Vice President of UPS (United Parcel Service) and that UPS wanted to deliver a \$850 check to the resident. The resident was suspicious and after some discussion, the caller urged the resident to call him back at a phone number with an 876 area code to make arrangements to deliver the check.

The target did not return the call and reported the incident to Humboldt County District Attorney Investigator Cox as a possible scam.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), variations on the scam include telling targets that a relative has been injured or arrested, an unpaid account must be settled, or a cash prize can be claimed. When the victim returns the call, they are kept on the line for as long as possible to run up international phone charges.

Calls may be received on cell, office or home phones. Scammers may also send emails relaying the same or similar messages and urging recipients to make a call to an overseas number. Targets are especially vulnerable because a phone number with the 876 area code can easily be mistaken for a United States number.

Targets of this or other telemarketing fraud are urged to report it to the FTC at www.ftc.gov or 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357).

Residents can also call the Humboldt County District Attorney's Office at (707) 445-7411 to report possible scams or get more information.