



Inspector General Insights

Background: As previously reported in Office of Inspector General (OIG) Investigations Report 2021.07 ([Prepaid Debit Card Fraud Scheme](#)), fraud schemes have been perpetrated to defraud residents via the use of prepaid debit cards or gift cards. The Clerk detailed information about a similar jury duty scam in her February 2022 newsletter. Then in July 2022, this scam resurfaced in nearby counties, and the Clerk responded by issuing a press release to warn residents how to address this threat.

A Jury Duty scam typically involves an imposter contacting a Florida resident, claiming the resident missed jury duty, and now must pay a fine. The imposter states that a warrant will be issued for your arrest because you have failed to show for jury duty. The only way to avoid arrest and incarceration is to immediately pay a fine by credit card, prepaid debit cards/gift cards, or money transfer. The scammers then direct residents to pay their fine by purchasing a gift card, and to then read out the gift card code information over the phone.

If you protest that you never received a jury summons, the scammer asks for your Social Security number and date of birth, claiming to need it to cancel the arrest warrant. However, the personal information that you divulge may be used to commit additional fraud.

The Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court is responsible for processing jurors including qualifications, summonses, selection lists and reporting. A jury duty summons will only be delivered by U.S. mail.

Objective: To make residents aware that scammers are contacting Florida residents claiming they missed jury duty.

Scope / Methodology: There was a surge of similar scams across the state in the early months of 2022. In July 2022, this scam was reported again in the Manatee and Sarasota County area.

Observations: Clerk Kinzel alerted Collier County residents and advised citizens to never give personal or financial information over the phone to a stranger, especially if the caller acts aggressively. For example, anyone asking for payments to be made through a gift card is a high scammer risk. Also, be wary of caller ID, as this can be spoofed, making a phone call look like it is coming from a natural source.

Neither law enforcement nor court agencies will ever contact you by telephone or email about missed jury duty or call you to collect payment of a fine by any method including credit card or prepaid debit cards/gift cards. This scam can take other forms, including impersonating the IRS, your bank, utilities, and many other legitimate organizations.

The OIG received a similar complaint in May 2022 (Case 2022.019). The complainant stated that she received an email which demanded that she pay \$500.00 to stop further action against her, and which gave her a phone number to call for additional details. When the victim called the number, she spoke with an unknown person who gave her instructions on how to purchase a Home Depot gift card. She later called back with the gift card number and PIN, and she asked the suspect to furnish a confirmation number for her payment. The suspect responded that she would be transferred to a supervisor, and then hung up the call.

Recommendations & Actions: “If you receive a call from someone saying you’ve missed jury duty and need to pay a fine, immediately hang up the phone.” said Crystal K. Kinzel, Collier County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller. “Our office does not offer the option to purchase a gift card; please contact our office immediately at (239) 252-8412 to report fraud.”

In Case 2022.019, the OIG advised the complainant to file a police report with the Collier County Sheriff’s Office, and we provided her with the appropriate contact information. The OIG also sent her a copy of the Florida Identity Theft Victim Kit via email for additional information on how to report the incident to state and federal agencies.

Total # Transactions	Amounts Audited or Reviewed	Questioned Costs	Taxpayer Savings	# Observations / Recommendations
1	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	1