



Inspector General Insights

Background: On January 5, 2023, Collier County Clerk of Courts and Comptroller Crystal Kinzel alerted Collier County residents that scammers are calling and falsely claiming that residents failed to appear at a court hearing. The scammers are then requesting that residents pay between \$3,000.00 to \$3,500.00 through Cash App to avoid executing an arrest warrant. A press release providing an update was issued on January 12, 2023.

Objective: To inform resident of fraud schemes active in the community.

Scope: In total, seven (7) complaints have been reported to either the Office of Inspector General or Collier County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) Financial Crimes Bureau as of January 12, 2023.

Observations All complainants indicated that they received suspicious phone calls from the same phone number (239-351-5418) from individuals identifying themselves as either "Sergeant Jefferson" or "Lieutenant Cooper." According to the Sheriff's Financial Crimes Bureau, the phone number reported is no longer in service.

Recommendations & Actions: "If you receive a call from someone saying you've missed a court hearing or jury duty and need to pay a fine in order to avoid being arrested, immediately hang up the phone," said Crystal K. Kinzel, Collier County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller. "Our office does not utilize this type of intimidation tactic. Please contact our Inspector General hotline immediately to report scams or fraud."

Collier residents are urged to never give personal or financial information over the phone to a stranger, especially if the caller acts aggressively. Calls asking for payments made by cash, gift card or in person are a red flag for a fraud scheme. Residents should be wary of caller ID, as this can be spoofed, making a phone call look like it is coming from a legitimate source.

"Criminals can be extremely savvy and have the ability to mimic a credible source. Anytime someone contacts you and asks for money or personal information our advice is to hang up. The odds are overwhelming that someone is trying to scam you," said Sheriff Kevin Rambosk.

Conclusion: Clerk Kinzel's Office of Inspector General can be reached at (239) 252-8412, or through the 24-hour confidential hotline at 844-ClerkIG (844-253-7544). Alternately, you may submit a complaint online at www.CollierClerk.com.

Collier County Sheriff's Office offers assistance with suspicious encounters involving a request for money or personal information through its Call Before You "Pay" hotline – (239) 252-CALL (2255). The hotline is staffed Monday through Friday by a deputy in the Financial Crimes Bureau.

Total # Transactions	Fraud Amounts Attempted	Questioned Costs	Taxpayer Savings	# Fraud Complaints Confirmed
7	\$ 21,000.00	N/A	N/A	7