



SANTA CRUZ POLICE DEPARTMENT
155 Center Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

MEDIA RELEASE



DATE/TIME: Sunday 1/10/16

TOPIC: SCAM ALERT

INFORMATION:

The Santa Cruz Police Department is warning the public to beware of a hoax kidnapping scam aimed at extorting money from concerned relatives.

Santa Cruz Police received three reports over the weekend from distraught community members. Victims reported they had received calls from someone claiming to have kidnapped a family member and demanding cash for their safe return. This phone scam attempts to convince the victim to send money despite no actual kidnapping taking place.

All three of the calls were suspiciously very similar. The community member answers the telephone and immediately hears either a baby crying or a female adult crying. A male voice calls the victim by either their first or last name. The male then says, "This is a kidnapping listen to my instructions.", "We are holding your family members hostage." or "Send me money or you will never see your family members again".

In each case, the reporting party hung up on the scam caller. Victims quickly checked on the welfare of their family then called authorities to report the incident.

The Santa Cruz Police confirmed in all three cases that the relative was not in danger. All the victims' family members were determined to be safe. SCPD Officers who investigated the scam calls discovered that all the phony calls were made from blocked or restricted number.

Anyone who receives a similar call is urged to call 911 and should try to get in touch with their family member to determine whether the call is legitimate.

SCPD Police believe this phone scam is a variation of what's come to be called the "[Virtual Kidnapping Scam](#)". The FBI has this advice to avoid being victimized by this or similar scams:

- Resist the pressure to act quickly.
- Try to contact your family member to determine whether or not the call is legitimate.
- Never wire money based on a request made over the phone or in an e-mail, especially overseas. Wiring money is like giving cash—once you send it, you can't get it back.

For additional information, contact: Joyce Blaschke

Phone: (831) 420-5844

Anonymous tips can also be sent to the police department through our Tip Line (831) 420-5995, or from our Website; www.santacruzpolice.com. Tipsters can also submit an anonymous tip via our smartphone app or from an SMS text. Visit our Website for instructions.