

Supervisor's June Message – Protect Yourself Against Scammers

Scammers are not just a nuisance, they are dangerous, costing victims billions of dollars a year. Their scams work because they use tactics to confuse victims, causing them to panic and make poor decisions under pressure. They also prey on the most vulnerable, often times going after senior citizens.



Many scams start with a phone call or text, telling the victim that something in their personal life has gone wrong, whether a grandchild is at the Holding Center and needs money, or their Amazon account was shut off and to click the link to reinstate it.

The scammers present them a problem that they want to fix immediately. Law enforcement, banks, utility companies, etc. all warn the public repeatedly that the actions of scammers are NOT how they operate. If someone is demanding immediate payment, hang-up.

Be aware that the approach of scammers constantly changes. It could be someone pretending to be from your bank to impersonating a family member who is supposedly in need of help. Scammers will also mine social media accounts and online information to obtain as much personal information about the victim as possible so the victim believes it must be true. Follow the Amherst Police Department on social media (www.facebook.com/amherstpoliceny) to learn more about specific scams reported in our area. As a general rule, if you are unsure if the caller or texter is legitimate, listen to your gut because it is likely a scam. Simply, hang-up the phone or don't click any links sent to you. If you want to verify, call the customer service number for the entity allegedly involved or consult a trusted family member or friend to help you navigate the problem.

If you have an elderly or vulnerable friend or family member, talk to them about scams and how to avoid them. Also discuss the importance of not hiding if they are scammed. Too often once a scammer finds a victim, they don't stop at one money transaction, they attempt to get more money, knowing they found an easy target. It can be embarrassing for a victim, but it is critical they ask for help and report it.

In addition to public service announcements and educational programs from the Town's police department and senior center, the police department operates an [Internet Exchange Safe Zone](#) for anyone who is selling/buying on items on Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist and eBay. The zone consists of two designated parking spaces in the front parking lot at of police headquarters (500 JJ Audubon Parkway) and a designated area inside the front lobby. Both of these are under 24-hour video surveillance. Feel free to stop into the lobby and let an officer know that you will be conducting an exchange for goods sold/bought on

Facebook Marketplace/ebay/Craigslist. If you have any questions call 716-689-1322. One resident recently told my office that he has used the site, and found that even mentioning the exchange would be at the safe zone weeds out the scammers. This is a great tool.

We cannot stop the scammers but we can continue to educate the community on what not to do and ways to protect themselves. Educating yourself and your loved ones is the single best way to combat scammers. In addition to programming offered by the town's senior center, the Attorney General's Office provides online tools, visit <https://ag.ny.gov/publications/smart-seniors>. If you do find yourself victim to a scam, please contact the Amherst Police Department at 716-689-1322 to file a report. Remember that scammers will say anything to get your money. Don't fall for their tactics.