



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

P.O. BOX 10070 – BROOKSVILLE, FL 34603-0070 FAX 352 796-0493 PHONE 352 754-6830

From: Michael Terry
Deputy PIO, 352-238-4801

Re: HCSO Warns of Latest Telephone Scam Targeting Hernando County Residents

Date: May 27, 2020

A new twist on an old scam is currently making its way through Hernando County.

In recent days, three citizens have contacted the Hernando County Sheriff's Office to report they have received a telephone call from an individual identifying himself as being from the Hernando County Sheriff's Office (HCSO).

The caller, who identifies himself as Sgt. Killingsworth, tells the victim there is a warrant for his or her arrest for not appearing for jury duty, and in order to "clear this up" a sum of money must be paid immediately. The scammers have also left voicemails directing the victims to call a bogus telephone number where an automated message informs the victim they are calling the Hernando County Sheriff's Office warrants section.

In the past, many citizens have fallen victim to this type of scam.

In the most recent cases, the caller told the victim he (the victim) had recently missed jury duty and due to that, a warrant had been issued for his arrest. If he did not want to be arrested, he would need to remain on the phone with the caller and pay a \$1127.23 fine via credit card.

In one instance, upon the citizen questioning the legitimacy of the caller, the scammer texted a bogus press release to the victim about a new method implemented by the Sheriff's Office to pay citations, warrants, fines and fees due to the Coronavirus. They also texted the victim a picture of the supposed warrant that was issued for their arrest. The bogus press release directs the victim to use a Bitcoin ATM kiosk to pay the outstanding fine in order to clear up the warrant.

If you receive a call from someone claiming to be with the Sheriff's Office, any law enforcement agency, the IRS, or someone telling you that you owe money and you **MUST PAY IT NOW**, hang up, it's a scam. Calls of this nature are not made by law enforcement agencies and/or the IRS.

In an attempt to sound authentic, the scammer may use the name of an actual employee at the Sheriff's Office or provide the correct telephone number for the agency. The scammer may also use an app to "spoof" the number they are calling from, to make it appear they are actually calling from the HCSO or at the very least, a local telephone number.

During the call, the scare tactics are used to get the victim to pay money now. One such recent tactic was “You have a warrant for your arrest. You must pay now, or you will be arrested.”

Again, employees of law enforcement agencies do not call citizens to demand money. If you receive a call like this, hang up, it’s a scam.

Outstanding warrants absolutely cannot be resolved over the telephone. Warrants can only be cleared through the court system. Individuals with outstanding warrants should turn themselves in at any Sheriff’s Office location or Detention Facility.

For more information, or to check if you have an outstanding warrant, please visit <https://www.hernandosheriff.org/applications/records/localwarrants.aspx?fbclid=IwARogkwXyiMXtVeQ9XHZ18E9cZEPnZXx7z9Y3y6jzikSKLSnzPq3GiAgrlcQ>

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the

ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, ran unopposed in 2016, and remains accountable to them.