

**FROM THE OFFICE OF WELD COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
KENNETH R. BUCK**



Fraud Alert!

DON'T LET A BIG HEART GET YOU IN BIG TROUBLE



It is a terrible thought: a loved one calls you to say that they have been arrested, or are in the hospital, and they desperately need money. They provide you with an address of where money should be wired, usually in a different country, and rely on the urgency of their request to get you to send funds quickly. Most relatives would not think twice about questioning such a request — and scammers know that.

Reports of this type of scam are becoming more and more common. Thieves gather just enough information about a person (name, age, address, and phone number) to pass themselves off as a relative — many times as a grandchild. This information is easily gathered on the internet or could be provided through casual conversation with an actual friend or family member, unbeknownst to them.

The thief then calls the relative with the urgent request (relying on people's good nature and willingness to help others). The relative, wanting to help, wires the money — many times with no questions asked. By the time the family member realizes they were scammed, their money is long gone.

So how can this scam be so popular — don't people recognize the voices of their own family members? Not always. Thieves often pose as grandchildren relying on the premise that phone conversations between adult grandchildren and their grandparents are fairly infrequent and therefore easily confused. Remember, the thief only needs to stay on the phone long enough to tell you about the "problem" and direct you to where the money can be wired so as to help them out of the "problem." The tone of the phone call will be urgent or panicked and there won't be much room for questions on the victim's end.

Preventing family members from falling victim to this type of scam, however, is easy. If you receive such a call, ask the person a question which only a true family member would know the answer to or talk to family members about a "code" word that would help other family members authenticate the identity of the caller. Also, call relatives of the family member and verify the "story" or "problem". Since you will probably be asked to wire money out of the country, ask family members if that individual is actually out of the country.

The key for not falling for this scam — as it is with most scams — is to take a moment, step away from the situation, and think about the issue, problem, or proposition. Don't react without research.

Contact your local police agency if you think you are a victim of a crime. To contact the Weld County District Attorney's Office, call (970) 356-4010 ext. 4702.