



# Prince William County Police

## Community Crime Prevention Tip

7/23/15

### Seniors and Romance Scammers

We've all heard of on-line dating scams that try to get you to send money to someone in Ghana or Nigeria. But now, the number of people falling for those scams is growing at an alarming number.

New statistics out for the last six months of 2014 show, more than 6,400 Americans say they were scammed after visiting online dating sites in the second half of last year. According to the FBI, that fraud cost users nearly \$82 million. Many of those being targeted are senior citizens longing to get back in the dating pool.

"These are people who have worked so hard for their savings and now they are giving it all away to the romance scammers," Barbara Hannah Gufferman with the AARP explained.

Her organization is now warning members that seniors are a prime target for online dating scams. "The studies show that as you get older, your ability to decipher deceit declines," Gufferman noted. "That means as you get older you have to be even more vigilant."

#### What is an online dating scam?

An online dating scam is when a scammer, male or female, creates a false personal profile and makes contact with you via an online dating agency or chat room. The scammer says that they are seeking romance or a soul mate but are really out to steal not only your heart but your cash too.

#### How do I know it's a scam?

The scammer will ask for your money! This will not happen immediately - however, before long the scammer will ask for financial help for any number of reasons. Almost always, they will ask you to send money using an untraceable source such as a wire transfer service. Some of the most common reasons they give for why they need your help include:

- They want to meet you but don't have enough money to travel to see you
- They are stranded abroad and don't have money for travel or visa costs or someone stole their wallet

#### Common traits among online scammers:

- Those who make frequent spelling errors
- Use a fake photo
- Profess love too soon
- Often claim to be working overseas
- Of course, ultimately end up asking you for money.

#### What can you do to protect yourself from online dating scams?

"You're online and you are looking to date and you see some of these red flags pop up-- get a second opinion and ask a friend 'What do you think about this?'" Grufferman said. Only use a reputable online dating or chat service and follow the basic safety tips for online dating. Be skeptical and ask yourself simple questions like, "why am I the only person who can help them but I have just met them?" These scammers will claim you are their one and only love, but really you are their one and only target.

### REPORT ALL SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY TO THE POLICE

Emergency: 911 \* Non-Emergency: 703-792-6500 \* Crime Prevention Unit: 703-792-7270