



Fraud Target: Senior Citizens ***Source: FBI***

Why should Senior Citizens be concerned?

It has been the experience of the FBI that the elderly are targeted for fraud for several reasons:

1. Older American citizens are most likely to have a "nest egg," own their home and/or have excellent credit all of which the con-man will try to tap into. The fraudster will focus his or her efforts on the segment of the population most likely to be in a financial position to buy something.
2. Individuals who grew up in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s were generally raised to be polite and trusting. Two very important and positive personality traits, except when it comes to dealing with a con-man. The con-man will exploit these traits knowing that it is difficult or impossible for these individuals to say "no" or just hang up the phone.
3. Older Americans are less likely to report a fraud because they don't know who to report it to, are too ashamed at having been scammed, or do not know they have been scammed. In some cases, an elderly victim may not report the crime because he or she is concerned that relatives may come to the conclusion that the victim no longer has the mental capacity to take care of his or her own financial affairs.
4. When an elderly victim does report the crime, they often make poor witnesses. The con-man knows the effects of age on memory and he or she is counting on the fact that the elderly victim will not be able to supply enough detailed information to investigators such as: How many times did the fraudster call? What time of day did he or she call? Did he provide a call back number or address? Was it always the same person? Did you meet in person? What did the fraudster look like? Did he or she have any recognizable accent? Where did you send the money? What did you receive if anything and how was it delivered? What promises were made and when? Did you keep any notes of your conversations?

The victims' realization that they have been victimized may take weeks or, more likely, months after contact with the con-man. This extended time frame will test the memory of almost anyone.

5. Lastly, when it comes to products that promise increased cognitive function, virility, physical conditioning, anti-cancer properties and so on, older Americans make up the segment of the population most concerned about these issues. In a country where new cures and vaccinations for old diseases have given every American hope for a long and fruitful life, it is not so unbelievable that the products offered by these con-men can do what they say they can do.

Telemarketing Fraud

If you're age 60 or older, you may be a special target for people who sell bogus products and services by phone. Older women living alone are special targets of these scam artists. Telemarketing scams often involve offers of prizes, low-cost vitamins and health care products, and travel offers.

There are warning signs to these scams, including promises of "free" or "low cost" vacations and get rich quick schemes. If you hear these – or similar – "lines" from a telephone salesperson, just say "no thank you," and hang up the phone:

- "You must act 'now' or the offer won't be good."
- "You've won a 'free' gift, vacation, or prize." But you have to pay for "postage and handling" or other charges.
- "You must send money, give a credit card or bank account number, or have a check picked up by courier." You may hear this before you have had a chance to consider the offer carefully.
- "You don't need to check out the company with anyone." The callers say you do not need to speak to anyone including your family, lawyer, accountant, local Better Business Bureau, or consumer protection agency.
- "You don't need any written information about their company or their references."
- "You can't afford to miss this 'high-profit, no-risk' offer."

Remember, if you hear the lines above, or similar "lines" from a telephone salesperson, just say "no thank you," and hang up the phone.

Why do scams persist?

A fruitful scam goes undetected for years because...

- Victims may not know for months they've been taken.
- Frauds may migrate state to state.
- They change names, looks, and tactics.
- Scams may operate from a library, a vehicle or overseas.
- Often tough to prove; lack of hard evidence.
- Victims can't be found or won't testify.

Visit the FBI Web site www.fbi.gov/majcases/fraud/seniorsfam.htm for more information on fraud scams.

Prepared by the Communications staff of the Retirement Systems of Alabama. To have your questions answered in "Preparing for Retirement", please address them to [Michael Pegues, Communications, Retirement Systems of Alabama, P.O. Box 302150, Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2150](#). Please visit our Web site at www.rsa-al.gov.