



News from the State Courts

Oregon Judicial Department

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Court fine scams hit Washington residents and beyond

Bogus phone calls, emails, or texts regarding court fines may lead to fraud

SALEM, Oregon – Residents of more than a dozen Washington communities have received scam phone calls telling them they owe money to the Marion County Circuit Court in Salem, Oregon, according to officials at the Oregon Judicial Department (OJD). Some callers cite the names of specific deputies with the Marion County Sheriff's Office.

The scam calls indicate that the individual has missed a court appearance, or that a family member is being detained by law enforcement, and they may be subject to fines, prosecution, or jail time if they don't pay up. The scammers usually tell people to pay by purchasing a prepaid debit or gift card and providing these cards or card code numbers to people over the phone or in person.

OJD officials emphasize that these fraudulent calls and messages are not connected with the state or federal courts or regional law enforcement agencies. State and federal courts and law enforcement agencies do not require anyone to provide sensitive information in a telephone call, email, or text or make payments via prepaid debit or gift cards.

OJD reports that residents in communities all along Washington's I-5 corridor and east to Wenatchee have been receiving the calls in recent days. Court officials say it is likely other regions may be targeted as well.

Here is what to do if you receive a phone call, email or text that demands information or money:

- DO NOT provide the requested information or payment.
- DO NOT reply directly to the text or email, click on any links, or open any attachments, even if it appears that the message is coming from the court or a local police agency. Scammers often create messages that look like they are coming from a legitimate source.
- Hang up the phone and do not engage with the caller.
- Reach out directly to the court or law enforcement agency named to verify or report the contact.

Contact information:

Oregon state circuit courts: www.courts.oregon.gov/courts.

Washington state courts: www.courts.wa.gov/court_dir.

Federal courts: www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/federal-courts-public/court-website-links.

If you have received one of these calls, emails, or texts and have given out personal information, report the information immediately to your bank and monitor your account statements and credit reports carefully. If any unauthorized charges are made, report the theft to local law enforcement and the Federal Trade Commission at 877-438-4338 or www.consumer.gov/idtheft. Also, contact a credit bureau to request that it place a fraud alert on your credit history.