



## **Town of Vienna, Virginia Police Department Media Information Release**

### **The Vienna Police Need Your Help in Catching Scammers**

### **No Solicitors Licenses are currently issued in the Town of Vienna!**

Over the past year or so the Town of Vienna Police Department has seen a rise in reports of scams and fraudulent activity. These complaints have ranged from someone stealing credit cards to make fraudulent purchases to someone compromising an unlocked wireless network to steal an identity, to fraudulent automobile warranty offers; and we need your help to stop these crimes and catch the criminals that perpetrate them.

As the area's population continues to age, it seems that individuals intent on defrauding someone are seeking out elderly folks; many of whom reside in the Town of Vienna. Reasons for this vary but most times it is because they prey on the honest, trusting nature of our seniors who may now need to use outside people to accomplish projects, repairs, and tasks they did for themselves in years gone by.

This article serves to provide a brief explanation about some fraud schemes and scams that our agency has encountered or has learned about. Furthermore, it will provide you with several points of contact so you can follow the latest scam trends and make yourself and others aware of these types of crimes. Prevention and knowledge is the best means to combat this growing issue.

At present, there are **NO** legitimate solicitor's licenses currently issued in the Town of Vienna. Although this may change in the future, chances are that anyone who knocks on your door is not in compliance with the Town Code regarding having their background checked. So unless the person knocking on your door is from a church, school, or other excluded group according to Town Code Chapter 15, they are **NOT** allowed to be soliciting without a license. This includes anyone going door to door distributing flyers, unless they are affiliated with a political organization or charitable purpose.

We need for all Town of Vienna citizens to call the Vienna Police when someone knocks on your door trying to solicit work or sell goods. Even if they seem to be legitimate we would like to identify them. We need citizen's help so we can stop the scams and loss of money being incurred by some of our residents. **PLEASE CALL THE VIENNA POLICE ANYTIME A SOLICITOR COMES TO YOUR DOOR** and they don't have the proper license from the Town of Vienna. A Fairfax County or State of Virginia license is not sufficient in Vienna. They must have a Town issued license. Our officers can then respond to stop and identify these people; many of whom may be career criminals.

Most people are familiar with the Nigerian money scam and most of us know what identity theft is, but as technology develops and economic times get tougher, so too does the criminal element. Some of the scams we are hearing about are downright ingenious, albeit illegal.

### **Several examples of scams and fraudulent operations include:**

**Vehicle Warranty Scam-** A call comes in from an individual stating that your vehicle warranty is running out or has run out. They want you to send information and money to them to extend your warranty. When you do, the individual becomes unreachable or if you make installment payments and it comes time to file a claim; you find out the company no longer exists or never did exist.

**Tree Worker Scam-** A tree worker solicits door to door and tells you that your home is in danger from dangerously old trees and limbs. They ask for a sum of money as a down payment and tell you they will return at another time to do the work. Either they do return and tell you that you need to do more work or they disappear; along with your down payment. If they do come back they may tell you that you need additional work or roofing repairs, and then ask for more money.

In this case they will typically tell you that some part of your house needs fixing and you would have a difficult time accessing the area so you ask them to repair it. Either minimal work is done or none at all; both of which are illegal.

**Distraction of the Homeowner-** A repairman comes to your home to give you an estimate for some repairs. They ask you to go to the basement and knock on a pipe or some similar excuse. Meanwhile they are stealing from your drawers and bedrooms and other places while you both are in two different areas of the home.

**Impersonating a Town of Vienna Employee-** A subject approaches your home and purports himself to be a Town of Vienna employee needing to inspect something inside the home or around your curtilage. Please ask for Town issued identification. All Town of Vienna employees will have a photo ID with them when out performing work in the community. They will readily identify themselves when asked.

**Counterfeit Money to make Good on an Accident-** A repairman comes and says that they have severed a water line and some of your water escaped. They say they want to be good folks and repay you for the water they used up. After they ask to go to your bathroom to “assess” how much water they used, they come back and offer you a sum of money. The sum is significantly larger than what they “owe” you so you give them change for the larger bill.

They have just traded you a counterfeit note for an amount of genuine cash that you gave them in change.

**Driveway Sealing-** A crew comes and tells you that they can fix cracks in your sidewalk or driveway. While out there, they come back and tell you that they can seal your driveway as well. After you pay them, they spread used motor oil or black paint or some similar substance on the driveway which looks real. They then leave with your money and leave you with the mess.

**Internet Scams-** Phishing and fictitious emails are a huge problem. There are too many to mention but basically the emails or false web pages look identical to genuine pages. The page says you have an invalid account or your account is in need of updating. So you enter your password and information and now the criminal has it.

**Rule of Thumb- NEVER; EVER give out your log-in ID, password, credit card number, PIN, or bank information to anyone unless YOU initiated the contact.** If in doubt; don't do anything and call or visit your bank or institution.

**Wireless/ Internet Fraud-** If you have an unsecured wireless router or network set up in your home, anyone with a laptop computer can stop in the vicinity of your home and access your network. From the street, driveway, sidewalk, or anywhere that they can receive the signal.

Always password protect your network.

**Lottery Winner Scam-** An email arrives notifying you that you have won a large sum of money. All you have to do is pay the taxes on the winnings. They ask you to mail a check for that amount to them. Once you do, your money is gone as there are no winnings to retrieve.

**Lower your Interest Rate on Credit Cards Scam-** A person calls and offers to lower your interest rates on your credit cards. They interview you and obtain personal information; to include credit card numbers. They then use your information to make fraudulent purchases or steal your identity.

Again, rule of thumb- **DO NOT GIVE OUT PERSONAL INFORMATION UNLESS YOU INITIATE THE CONTACT WITH THE FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.**

These are just a few examples of current scams and issues. By taking a few simple steps you can better maintain your safety and identity and hopefully not fall prey to these scammers.

Below are listed several internet links/ URLs to sites that will assist you in reading more in-depth accounts of these scams and others. Additionally, there is a link to **Vienna Police Highlights** which outlines the most current crimes and offenses which have occurred in the Town of Vienna. This summary is published on a weekly basis.

The below link takes you to Vienna Police Highlights:

[http://www.viennava.gov/Town\\_Departments/police\\_vpd\\_highlights.htm](http://www.viennava.gov/Town_Departments/police_vpd_highlights.htm)

Below is the link to Town Code Chapter 15 which explains the laws regarding peddlers and solicitors:

[http://www.viennava.gov/Town\\_Departments/CHAPTER15.pdf](http://www.viennava.gov/Town_Departments/CHAPTER15.pdf)

Below is a link to a larger listing of known scams compiled by the San Antonio, Texas Police Department:

<http://www.sanantonio.gov/SAPD/SCAMS.asp?res=1280&ver=true>

Below is a link to the Vienna Police General Information page. On this page there are several links to documents which may be of interest:

[http://www.viennava.gov/Town\\_Departments/Police.htm](http://www.viennava.gov/Town_Departments/Police.htm)

Should you desire a presentation or more information on this or any other topic, please contact the Town of Vienna Police Department's Public Information Officer- MPO Bill Murray at [wmurray@viennava.gov](mailto:wmurray@viennava.gov) or 703-255-6396.

**For Further Information please contact  
MPO Bill Murray- Town of Vienna Police Public Information Officer  
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