

MAMMOTH LAKES POLICE DEPARTMENT

568 Old Mammoth Rd., P.O. Box 2799, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

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Type of Incident: Community Crime Alert: Extortion Attempt/SCAM

Date/Time of Incident: May 19, 2015

Location: Mammoth Lakes

Officers/Agencies Involved: Mammoth Lakes Police Department

Suspect: Unknown/Possibly Foreign National

Victim: [Click here to enter text.](#)

On Tuesday May 19, 2015 Mammoth Lakes Police were contacted regarding a possible kidnapping. The reporting party, a local Mammoth Lakes resident, told police that he had just received a call on his cell phone. The suspect stated that he had kidnapped his son and would need to pay or they would kill him. It was later learned that he also called the reporting party's wife, on her cell phone. The reporting party said he could hear a child in the background screaming, "Daddy, they are hurting me." The caller instructed the reporting party to go the bank, withdraw all of his funds and take the money to the Vons parking lot, where he would meet the suspect in a white van. The reporting party was further told that if he contacted the police, his son would be killed. The caller telephoned several times. While other officers were formulating a tactical plan, Officer Lehr, the School Resource Officer first confirmed that the child was currently in school, and then personally made contact with him to confirm he was safe and had not actually been kidnapped. The caller eventually demanded that the reporting party purchase a money order and send it to a location in Mexico. Since the child was already confirmed to be safe and had not in fact been the victim of an actual kidnapping, the communications between the reporting party and the caller ceased. The caller was a male, with a Hispanic accent. No suspect has been identified.

The FBI has been notified regarding this case. Per the FBI, this type of Virtual Kidnapping Scam is on the rise and offers the following tips:

To avoid becoming a victim of this extortion scheme, look for the following possible indicators:

- Incoming calls come from an outside area code, sometimes from Puerto Rico with area codes (787), (939) and (856)
- Calls do not come from the kidnapped victim's phone
- Callers go to great lengths to keep you on the phone

FOR TIPS, VISIT OUR WEBSITE www.mammothlakespd.org AND SEND AN EMAIL OR CALL OUR TIP HOT LINE @ 760 934-3261.

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- Callers prevent you from calling or locating the “kidnapped” victim
- Ransom money is only accepted via wire transfer service

If you receive a phone call from someone who demands payment of a ransom for a kidnapped victim, the following should be considered:

- Try to slow the situation down. Request to speak to the victim directly. Ask, “How do I know my loved one is okay?”
- If they don’t let you speak to the victim, ask them to describe the victim or describe the vehicle they drive, if applicable.
- Listen carefully to the voice of the kidnapped victim if they speak.
- Attempt to call, text, or contact the victim via social media. Request that the victim call back from his or her cell phone.
- While staying on the line with alleged kidnappers, try to call the alleged kidnap victim from another phone.
- To buy time, repeat the caller’s request and tell them you are writing down the demand, or tell the caller you need time to get things moving.
- Don’t directly challenge or argue with the caller. Keep your voice low and steady.
- Request the kidnapped victim call back from his/her cell phone.

If you receive this or a similar call, **do** notify law enforcement immediately, and **don’t** make any payments or other concessions prior to doing so.

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