

Phone scammers targeting Placer County

Placer County is getting hit hard by phone scams. Savvy scammers are making money by using new tactics.

Victims have reported to the Placer County Sheriff's Office that they were contacted by someone saying they are from PG&E or another utility service. The victim is told that their service will be shut off if there is no immediate payment made. The victim is instructed to make the payment using "Green Dot MoneyPaks." One local victim was scammed out of \$2,900.

The second scam is when a victim gets a call from someone claiming to be a family member in jail or in a medical facility. The victim is instructed to send a "Moneygram" to a specified location.

A Green Dot MoneyPak is a prepaid card usually used by people who don't have bank accounts. The cards are available at retail stores for \$4.95. They can be loaded with up to \$500 at most retailers or \$1,000 if used at Walmart, and then used to shop online or to add money to a PayPal account.

Victims are told to buy a Green Dot MoneyPak card, load it with a specific amount of cash, and transfer the serial number to the swindler who then transfers the money to another card.

Scammers like using Green Dot MoneyPak cards because it isn't linked to a bank account and just like cash, it's untraceable. Unlike cash, though, the transaction can be done over the phone, so it's totally anonymous, making it just about impossible to catch the criminal.

Sheriff's deputies are reminding citizens to never give personal information to a stranger and to be wary of anyone

who calls on the phone trying to collect a debt.