



Press Release

DATE: April 23, 2014

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SUBJECT: Impersonation of Public Defender

The San Bernardino County Public Defender's office would like to issue a warning about a sophisticated phone scam that may be targeting residents in the community. Scammers, impersonating loved ones, are calling residents informing them that they, a loved one, have found themselves in trouble and incarcerated in a San Bernardino County jail for driving under the influence and hit and run. The impersonator advises family members that a public defender has worked out a great deal whereby a case is dismissed or the charges dropped if a relative pays for the damages to the vehicle. A second person, impersonating a public defender, follows up with a call to the family member, advising him/her that he/she is the assigned public defender and has negotiated a deal that allows for the case to be dismissed and the loved one to be released from custody. The impersonator directs the relative to send \$5,000 (or a variation thereof) for restitution, giving instructions on how and where to send the money.

Residents should be aware that no public defender will contact a member of the public by telephone to demand money via wire transfer or any other form of payment. Anyone receiving such a phone call should refuse the demand and contact his/her local law enforcement agency.