



Los Angeles County
Sheriff's Department

IMPORTANT WARNING, AND THE LATEST ON RECENT TELEPHONE SCAMS HAPPENING NOW

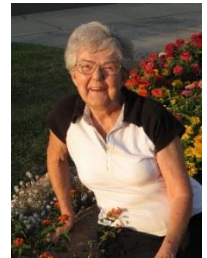
Most of us have become – regrettably – accustomed to unwanted telemarketing calls to our cell and home phones. But what do you do if the caller identifies as the IRS, law enforcement, bank employee, or other legitimate-sounding authority?



DON'T allow yourself or an elderly relative to fall victim to phone scams! We hope you'll review this and share it with potential victims.

Here are some TRUE STORIES of recent frauds:

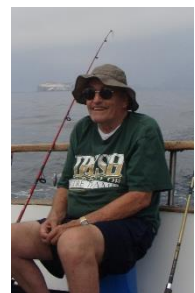
- "I'm from the IRS and you owe \$2,300 **now** to avoid an audit..."
- A caller identifies himself as a Deputy Sheriff and demands payment of a fine for failure to appear for jury duty.
- A caller represents himself as "tech support," promises to send a rebate for recent computer problems, and asks for information about computer log on passwords. The caller then accesses the victim's computer, locks it, and demands ransom to unlock the computer.
- A caller demands that a woman withdraw \$5,000 from her bank or she'll be arrested.
- A caller represents himself as the grandson of an elderly man, and asks him to wire \$5,000 so the grandson can bail out of jail.
- A caller represents himself as a police officer in a far-away state, demanding payment of a fine to keep a relative out of jail.
- A caller says he's kidnapped the victim's daughter, demanding that the victim go to a bank and withdraw \$4,700 to release her. (The caller had information about the daughter's school. She was located safe and unaware.)
- "A new government program will provide free debt relief for 90% of your outstanding credit card debt. All you have to do is send us \$500."



FIRST: DO NOT MAKE A PAYMENT OF ANY KIND without verifying the information through a reliable source. DO NOT provide a caller with your social security number, birthdate, account details, or any other private information. Any legitimate caller would already have this information!



The vast majority of these calls are scams. Legitimate persons with whom you do business will contact you via conventional means, and none will require payment via wire transfer, electronic debit card such as a "Green Dot" card, or checking account routing number.



The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has an [excellent site](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0076-phone-scams), including a breakdown of some common types of scams, as well as advice on appropriate actions.

<http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0076-phone-scams> <http://1.usa.gov/XMG7zA>

The following pages contain great advice from the FTC. [One of our past articles](#) on the San Dimas Station [website](#) provides tips on other, “in person” type scams and cons.

Previous article: [Scams, Con Men, and Frauds: Beware!](#) <http://bit.ly/1REfHKD>



Be wise, and don't fall prey to phone scams. PLEASE share this information with elderly persons and others who might not have access to computer-based information! If in doubt, call the FTC, your local police, Sheriff's station, lawyer, or knowledgeable business professional for advice.

San Dimas Station may be reached at (909)450-2700.

Call the Federal Trade Commission at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357) or visit www.ftc.gov/complaint.

From the FTC site:

Signs of a Scam

Often, scammers who operate by phone don't want to give you time to think about their pitch; they just want you to say "yes." But some are so cunning that, even if you ask for more information, they seem happy to comply. They may direct you to a website or otherwise send information featuring “satisfied customers.” These customers, known as shells, are likely as fake as their praise for the company.

Here are a few red flags to help you spot telemarketing scams. If you hear a line that sounds like this, say "no, thank you," hang up, and [file a complaint with the FTC](#):

- *You've been specially selected (for this offer).*
- *You'll get a free bonus if you buy our product.*
- *You've won one of five valuable prizes.*
- *You've won big money in a foreign lottery.*
- *This investment is low risk and provides a higher return than you can get anywhere else.*
- *You have to make up your mind right away.*
- *You trust me, right?*
- *You don't need to check our company with anyone.*
- *We'll just put the shipping and handling charges on your credit card.*

How They Hook You

Scammers use exaggerated — or even fake — prizes, products or services as bait. Some may call you, but others will use mail, texts, or ads to get you to call them for more details. Here are a few examples of “offers” you might get:

- **Travel Packages.** “Free” or “low cost” vacations can end up costing a bundle in hidden costs. Some of these vacations never take place, even after you’ve paid.
- **Credit and loans.** [Advance fee loans](#), [payday loans](#), [credit card protection](#), and offers to [lower your credit card interest rates](#) are very popular schemes, especially during a down economy.
- **Sham or exaggerated business and investment opportunities.** Promoters of these have made millions of dollars. Scammers rely on the fact that business and investing can be complicated and that most people don’t research the investment.
- **Charitable causes.** Urgent requests for recent disaster relief efforts are especially common on the phone.
- **High-stakes foreign lotteries.** These pitches are against the law, which prohibits the cross-border sale or purchase of lottery tickets by phone or mail. What’s more, you may never see a ticket.
- **Extended car warranties.** Scammers find out what kind of car you drive, and when you bought it so they can urge you to buy overpriced — or worthless — plans.
- **“Free” trial offers.** Some companies use free trials to sign you up for products — sometimes lots of products — which can cost you lots of money because they bill you every month until you cancel.

Why They're Calling You

Everyone's a potential target. Fraud isn't limited to race, ethnic background, gender, age, education, or income. That said, some scams seem to concentrate in certain groups. For example, older people may be targeted because the caller assumes they may live alone, have a nest egg, or may be more polite toward strangers.

How to Handle an Unexpected Sales Call

Questions to Ask

When you get a call from a telemarketer, ask yourself:

- **Who's calling... and why?** The law says telemarketers must tell you it's a sales call, the name of the seller and what they're selling before they make their pitch. If you don't hear this information, say “no thanks,” and get off the phone.
- **What's the hurry?** Fast talkers who use high pressure tactics could be hiding something. Take your time. Most legitimate businesses will give you time and written information about an offer before asking you to commit to a purchase.

- **If it's free, why are they asking me to pay?** Question fees you need to pay to redeem a prize or gift. Free is free. **If you have to pay, it's a purchase — not a prize or a gift.**
- **Why am I “confirming” my account information — or giving it out?** Some callers have your billing information before they call you. They're trying to get you to say “okay” so they can claim you approved a charge.
- **What time is it?** The law allows telemarketers to call **only** between 8 am and 9 pm. A seller calling earlier or later is ignoring the law.
- **Do I want more calls like this one?** If you don't want a business to call you again, say so and register your phone number on the [National Do Not Call Registry](#). If they call back, they're breaking the law.

Some Additional Guidelines

- **Resist pressure to make a decision immediately.**
- **Keep your credit card, checking account, or Social Security numbers to yourself. Don't tell them to callers you don't know — even if they ask you to “confirm” this information. That's a trick.**
- Don't pay for something just because you'll get a “free gift.”
- Get all information in writing before you agree to buy.
- **Check out a charity before you give.** Ask how much of your donation actually goes to the charity. Ask the caller to send you written information so you can make an informed decision without being pressured, rushed, or guilted into it.
- If the offer is an investment, check with your [state securities regulator](#) to see if the offer — and the offeror — are properly registered.
- **Don't send cash by messenger, overnight mail, or money transfer. If you use cash or a money transfer — rather than a credit card — you may lose your right to dispute fraudulent charges. The money will be gone.**
- Don't agree to any offer for which you have to pay a “registration” or “shipping” fee to get a prize or a gift.
- Research offers with your [consumer protection agency or state Attorney General's office](#) before you agree to send money.
- Beware of offers to “help” you [recover money](#) you have already lost. Callers that say they are law enforcement officers who will help you get your money back “for a fee” are scammers.
- Report any caller who is rude or abusive, even if you already sent them money. They'll want more. Call 1-877-FTC-HELP or visit [ftc.gov/complaint](#).

What To Do About Pre-Recorded Calls

If you answer the phone and hear a recorded message instead of a live person, it's a [robocall](#). Recorded messages that are trying to sell you something are generally illegal unless you have given the company written permission to call you.

If you get a robocall:

- Hang up the phone. Don't press 1 to speak to a live operator or any other key to take your number off the list. If you respond by pressing any number, it will probably just lead to more robocalls.
- Consider asking your phone company whether they charge for blocking phone numbers. Remember that telemarketers change Caller ID information easily and often, so it might not be worth paying a fee to block a number that will change.
- Report your experience to the [FTC online](#) or by calling 1-888-382-1222.

If you get phone service through internet or cable, you might want to look into services that screen and block robocalls. Try doing an online search for "block robocalls."

From the FTC site:

You Might Also Like

- [Charity Scams](#)
- [Credit Card Interest Rate Reduction Scams](#)
- ["Free" Trial Offers?](#)



Join the National Do Not Call List

Register your home and mobile phone numbers with the [National Do Not Call Registry](#). This won't stop all unsolicited calls, but it will stop most.

If your number is on the registry and you still get calls, they're probably from scammers ignoring the law. Hang up, and report them at www.donotcall.gov.

SAN DIMAS STATION

San Dimas Sheriff's Station is one of six stations within the East Patrol Division of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The Station's jurisdiction encompasses approximately 276 square miles. In addition to serving the City of San Dimas, the station serves unincorporated communities of Azusa, Covina, Glendora, La Verne, Claremont, Pomona, the Los Angeles County portion of Mt. Baldy, a large portion of the Angeles National Forest (State Route 39), and portions of Angeles Crest Highway (Highway 2). The population for these areas is approximately one hundred and five thousand (105,000), nearly sixty-six thousand (69,000) in the unincorporated areas and more than thirty-six thousand (36,000) in the City of San Dimas.

San Dimas Sheriff's Station
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
270 S. Walnut Avenue
San Dimas, CA 91773
(909) 450-2700

Nextdoor: <https://nextdoor.com/>
Flickr photos for San Dimas Station: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sdmlasd>
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SDMLASD> <https://twitter.com/LASDAndy>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SanDimasSheriffsStation>
Website: <http://www.SanDimas.lasd.org>

LASD Text & Email (Register at <http://www.Nixle.com> :
<http://local.nixle.com/lasd---san-dimas-station-los-angeles-county-sheriff/>

And/or, in the [City of San Dimas, Code Red](#) <http://bit.ly/130HiGY>

LASD HEADQUARTERS:

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YouTube LASD Videos: <http://www.youtube.com/user/LACountySheriff/videos?view=0>
Alert LA County: Telephone emergency mass notification system
<http://www.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/alertla>
SNAP LA County: Specific Needs Disaster Voluntary Registry <http://snap.lacounty.gov/>

Text & Email, Register for LASD Nixle messages: To receive more detailed, up-to-date information via E-MAIL and/or TEXT directly from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), sign up for "Nixle" alerts at <http://www.Nixle.com> and register for "LASD – Headquarters Newsroom (SHB), Los Angeles County Sheriff" AND your local LASD station area. Or, to receive URGENT TEXT ALERTS ONLY, text your zip code to 888777. Standard text messaging rates may apply depending on your calling plan.

"If You See Something, Say Something"

LA Crime Stoppers: Partner to prevent or report crime by contacting your local Sheriff's station. Or if you wish to remain Anonymous, call "LA Crime Stoppers" by dialing 800-222-TIPS (8477), texting the letters TIPLA plus your tip to CRIMES (274637), or using the website <http://lacrimestoppers.org>

***Jim McDonnell, Sheriff
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department***