

This is the fifth installment of a 12 part series on Crime Prevention for the Drayton Valley area, starting in April 2016 and wrapping up in March 2017. The Drayton Valley RCMP is committed to assisting this community, and the intent of this series is to educate and inform the public on property crime, and what to do when you become a victim of it. While these tips may not solve all of your crime issues in the area, these tips will go a long way in assisting the investigators of your local Detachment in hopefully either recovering property and/or detecting the culprits involved in these crimes.

#### Part 5: Online Scams and Telemarketing Scams:

So imagine this scene- you are on your computer or internet connected device when receive an email. It looks official, saying that you are the sole heir of a vast fortune from a long lost family relative. All you need to do is send some money to cover legal fees. Then money for transportation. Then more money for some other issue. Before you know it you have sent thousands of dollars and no fortune is coming- you have been the victim of a scam. Online scams have been increasing in frequency and in the sophistication of the way criminals are bilking people out of their hard earned money.

Some of the common ones that your local Detachment receives complaints about are as follows:

1. The online dating scam- this is where people go looking for a partner and those feelings are played upon by criminals who are looking for an individual who may be susceptible to being scammed. Unfortunately what happens a lot of times is the love interest is in another country and “needs money to get a flight to see them” or some other excuse, which is more commonly paid than not by the victim- and leaving that victim paying, not only with a broken heart but an empty bank account.
2. The “something is wrong with your computer” scam- commonly known as *phishing*. You either get an email from Microsoft, or some other online entity like Amazon, Paypal, Yahoo or many others saying if you don’t respond your account will be suspended. The link requests you to enter your information and log in- but really what you are doing is providing your information to some criminal organization who will take that to assist in stealing your identity, or worse. Always check the link to see what the address is- and if you have any doubts contact the company involved to verify, using known contact information, not the contact info on the email. As an FYI this can also happen via text message or via phone as well.
3. The Marketplace type scam- this can be used on sites such as Kijiji, or Craigslist to name a couple- and usually what occurs is a person is interested in buying your item however wants to send a cheque and when it gets to you, is for much more than you had asked, usually for “shipping” or something like that, and with a request to cash the cheque and send back the excess funds. What is really happening is this is a fake cheque and the victim is sending back real money to the fraudster. Always deal personally where able and best practice is to receive payment with cash, in person.
4. The classic Sweepstakes scam- You get notified you won a sweepstakes, but need to cover the processing fees and/or taxes. When the person pays, no money ever arrives back.

Then we move to the Telemarketers- the ones who call and use a number of techniques to separate you from your money. Some use pressure tactics- and claim to be a representative of the Canada Revenue Agency or the RCMP. Some things to watch out for that will tell you if this is a legitimate call or not are:

1. No government agency will tell you that you have to pay a “fine” or “taxes” via a pre-paid credit card or iTunes cards. In a couple of cases it has been reported the use of threatening language to pressure people by saying they will be arrested if they don’t pay a “fine” on the phone, or “unlocking your computer”- The RCMP will not ever get you to pay a fine over the phone by providing your credit card info.
2. They will not ask for your financial information- remember- this is supposed to be the Canada Revenue Agency- they should have your information already. Them asking for it is a sure sign something is not right.
3. Ask for ways to legitimize the call- ask for a number to call them back. Then check with a known number from a directory to confirm this is actually who is calling. If you cannot confirm through these methods, or in doubt of the call, hang up. You can call the agency directly to get re-connected with whomever is calling if absolutely necessary. Also be aware that some places will have a fake caller ID. As such most agencies should have no problem giving you a number you can check out before calling back.
4. Some telemarketers will call asking for donations to a cause- and play on the sympathies of the victim, for incidents such as the recent wildfires or so on. All non profit charities should be registered and giving money to a cause like a Go Fund Me page is basically giving money to someone with no accountability.

The problem with all of these scams is you should start to see a pattern emerging- one that ultimately means the victim pays some sort of fee or cash up front to get something, or provides personal information- with the criminal getting the benefit- and millions upon millions of dollars are lost every year in this fashion. The statement “If it’s too good to be true, it is.” readily applies in most cases.

So what to do if this happens? First of all, gather as much details as you can- if it’s an email from an unknown source, don’t open it. Most times if you check the properties of the email you can copy down the information or take a screen shot of it. Sometimes an email from an unknown source has a virus so please be sure you anti-virus protection is up to date. If it’s a phone call, take down the number and what the phone call is about. More often than not the Police will have a record of the number involved in the same type of offence. In all cases, please report this information to the Police. If you have been the victim of a crime for this type of offence, please also report it. Sometimes it can be personally embarrassing to have fallen victim to these scams but it’s better to have the information out there so possibly these fraudsters can be caught with enough information to act on it.

Some good reference material to review for your information and education are:

The Canada Revenue Agency at: [www.cra.gc.ca/fraudprevention](http://www.cra.gc.ca/fraudprevention)

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police at: [www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/scams-fraudes/index-eng.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/scams-fraudes/index-eng.htm)

Next Month, in September 2016, we will discuss Mischief to Property and what to do when reporting it.

Yours in Service,

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