



Sheriff Issues Renewed “Computer Repair Scam” Alert

October 10, 2013

Sweetwater County Sheriff Rich Haskell today issued a renewed warning to the community concerning a telephone / computer scam that is once again making the rounds in Sweetwater County.

In this ruse, commonly called the “Computer Repair Scam,” or “Tech Support Scam,” scammers cold-call people, particularly seniors, and inform them that their computer has become infected with a virus, has fallen victim to malware, or is otherwise experiencing problems. The caller then encourages the prospective victim to turn on his or her computer so that they may work together to solve the non-existent problem.

Haskell noted that there was a rash of such calls locally in January and February of this year. He reiterated that scammers often falsely identify themselves as representatives of a legitimate, well-known companies such as Microsoft or anti-virus software manufacturers like Norton or McAfee in an effort to sound legitimate and may know their prospective victim’s name and address. “It’s all just part of the cybercrooks’ strategy to make their swindle sound more convincing,” he said.

In addition to providing sensitive identification and financial information to scammers, victims are charged anywhere from \$50 to \$500 in bogus “repair fees.” Officials say people have been conned out of tens of millions of dollars.

Computer crime experts offer the following tips for people to protect themselves from the “Computer Repair Scam:”

- Remember that computer and software companies aren’t going to call you to tell you about problems that you are having, and don’t be deceived if the caller knows your name and address. Such information is readily available from a wide variety of sources, including telephone books.**
- Never follow any instructions received during an unsolicited call, such as instructions to click on links, download attachments, provide user names or passwords, or agree to subscribe to any “security systems” stemming from unsolicited calls.**

Officials say that if you get an unsolicited call like this, just hang up, even if the caller knows your name and address.