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Attorney General DeWine Warns of Top Phone Scams During National Consumer Protection Week

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) – In recognition of National Consumer Protection Week, Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today warned consumers about five of the top phone scams reported to his office.

“Every day, there’s a scammer who picks up the phone, tells a big lie, and tries to get money from someone in Ohio,” Attorney General DeWine said. “No longer do thieves have to rob a bank to get cash. They just pick up the phone, tell a very detailed, believable story – and smart Ohioans all over the state fall for their scam. We want to help consumers avoid falling for con artists’ lies, and education is the best way we can help consumers be aware of their schemes.”

In 2014, the Ohio Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Section received approximately 1,200 complaints about phone scams. Consumer victims regularly report losing hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Some of the most prevalent or most costly scams include:

1. **IRS Imposter Scam** – Con artists call pretending to be the IRS. They claim the consumer must immediately send payment or be arrested or thrown in jail. Hundreds of consumers have called the Attorney General’s Help Center to report this scam. In a few cases, consumers reported sending between \$2,000 and \$28,000 to the ploy.
2. **Sweepstakes Scam** – Consumers receive a call saying they have won an international lottery or sweepstakes prize. In order to collect the winnings, however, the victim is told to send money for processing fees, taxes, or other costs. In reality, it’s all a scam. In 2014, the Ohio Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Section received over 150 complaints about sweepstakes phone scams, including dozens of consumers who reported losing \$40 to \$190,000.
3. **Grandparent Scam** – Scammers pretend to be a grandchild in trouble and call grandparents asking for immediate payment. The “grandchild” may claim to have been in a car accident, caught with drugs, or arrested. Grandparents are told to wire money or to buy a prepaid card and provide the card’s numbers to the caller. In 2014, more than 40 consumers filed complaints about the grandparent scam. The average loss was over \$4,700.
4. **Computer Repair Scam** – Consumers receive a call from someone who falsely claims to represent Microsoft or another computer support service. The caller says the consumer’s computer has a virus and offers to fix the problem, often asking the consumer to give the caller remote access to the consumer’s computer (which allows the caller to access the

consumer's computer from far away). Instead of fixing the problem, the caller locks the computer, takes the consumer's personal information, or charges the consumer.

5. **Grant Scam** – In a typical grant scam, consumers receive a call saying they have won a federal grant worth up to \$10,000. To receive the grant, the caller says the consumer must send a few hundred dollars to cover taxes, insurance, or other costs. In reality, there is no grant. In 2014, consumers reported losing between \$60 and \$6,000 to the ploy.

To help consumers avoid these and other phone scams, Attorney General DeWine also unveiled a new phone scams checklist, which is designed to be a quick reference sheet, kept near the phone, to help people detect the signs of a phone scam.

A copy of the [phone scam checklist](#) can be found on the Ohio Attorney General's website.

Attorney General DeWine's office also is issuing a "Video Tip of the Day" during National Consumer Protection Week. Those videos will be posted on social media.

Each year, representatives from Attorney General DeWine's Consumer Protection Section conduct over 200 educational events across the state. During National Consumer Protection Week alone, they are participating in over 20 events.

A list of events can be found on the [Ohio Attorney General's website](#).

To report a scam or for help resolving a consumer complaint, consumers should contact the Ohio Attorney General's Office at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov or 800-282-0515.