



3 November 2008

Dear Sir / Madam,

Crime Alert: New method of Kidnap Phone Scams

Over the past few months, there have been several reported cases of victims falling prey to a new method employed by culprits in the kidnap phone scam. These scams are designed to 'scare' the victims into parting with their money to ensure the safety of their family members.

Method of Operation

2. Previously, culprits would ask the victims to pay the "ransom" via remittance or bank transfer, in order to secure the release of their family members. However, with police actively engaging the remittance houses and banks to put a lid on such practices, a recent trend have been observed where the culprits ask the victim to personally handover or leave the "ransom" at a pre-arranged location locally, usually near an MRT station or park. Recently, there have been 30 such cases in which 12 victims were cheated of cash and valuables amounting to about \$172,000. A common tactic employed by such culprits would be as follows:

Over the Phone

- i. The culprit would call the victim and claim that his/her loved one (usually son or daughter) had been kidnapped and demand that a ransom be paid;
- ii. These fake threats would usually be accompanied by sounds of cries for help in the background;
- iii. In some instances, the phone would be passed to an accomplice who might pose as the kidnap victim, crying for help;
- iv. The culprits would then arrange with the victim to handover the ransom at a pre-arranged location, usually near an MRT station before "releasing" the victim's loved-one; and
- v. The culprits may also compel the victim not to hang up the phone so as not to allow the victim the opportunity to verify the well-being of his/her loved one.

Crime Prevention Measures

3. Members of public are advised to be vigilant of these scams and adopt the following prevention measures:

- i. Remain calm and contact your loved-one immediately on his/ her handphone, at the workplace/ school, friends who could be with him/ her, etc, to confirm his/ her safety. Should repeated attempts at contacting him/ her fail, seek assistance from the police immediately;

- ii. Attempt to verify the authenticity of the caller's claim by asking him questions to verify the identity of the purportedly kidnapped victim, for instance, the number of family members staying together or whether there are pets in the house;
- iii. Even if you have confirmed that your loved-one is safe, call the police immediately at '999' to report the case;
- iv. When reporting the case to the police, you should provide the following details to facilitate police follow-up action:
 - confirmation that your loved-one is safe.
 - demands made by the caller.
 - gender and accent of the caller.
 - date, time and place the caller had arranged for the ransom to be paid (if any).
 - any description of the ransom collector given by the caller (if any).
- v. Do not reveal your particulars to the culprits.
- vi. Do not transfer any money via remittance agencies, banks or any other means to the culprits.

Police Actions in Relation to such Cases

4. Upon receipt of such reports, Police's utmost concern is the safety of the victim and the "kidnapped" family member. After establishing that they are safe and that it is indeed a scam, Police would also advise the victim not to transfer any money to the culprits.

5. Police actions may differ from case to case as the facts and circumstances of each case are different. Generally, Police will respond immediately if there is an imminent danger/ threat to the victim or if the assessment is that the culprits can be apprehended. Otherwise, members of public will be advised to proceed to the nearest Police Station to lodge a report.

6. More details of other scam tactics (lucky draw, lottery and impersonation scams) and advisories can be found in the Singapore Police Force website at www.spf.gov.sg or the Commercial Affairs Department website at www.cad.gov.sg.

Yours faithfully,



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