

Leggett Warns Consumers About IRS Telephone Scam

by [Staff Writer](#)



Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett

Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett today announced a warning from Montgomery County's Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) and Montgomery County Police Financial Crimes Section, about a nationwide telephone scam that relies upon intimidation to steal millions of dollars from consumers.

Telephone scammers contact consumers and assert that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has prepared a warrant for their arrest and that the warrant will be served if the consumer does not immediately send money in order to mitigate the criminal charges. Federal authorities state that more than 1,000 victims nationwide have lost more than \$5 million to these con artists who pose as IRS agents and tell people that they will be arrested if they don't immediately pay thousands of dollars in unpaid taxes.

"When these types of consumer scams pop up in Montgomery County we want to get the word out to our residents not to fall prey to such deception," said Leggett. "There are new schemes being concocted every day, and unknowing consumers are the prime target."

A Montgomery County victim reports that the scam artist possessed the ability to instill fear and create a sense of urgency. The victim reports that the con artist told him that the IRS has been investigating his tax returns for the past six years and that they discovered tax code violations that required an immediate payment of \$7,130 to stop the legal process. The con artist asked for the consumer's cell phone number and told the victim that he needed to remain on the phone the entire time while completing the payments. The victim was directed to obtain reloadable cash cards to make the payment. The consumer went to a Safeway store to purchase six Green Dot® reloadable cash cards.

This consumer lost over \$3,000 in this scam, and was about to send and lose an additional \$4,000, if not for the intervention of staff at the Safeway store.

Leggett is commending the cashier and manager at Safeway for their intervention and for the corporate training they received from Safeway management to identify scams in progress.

"We are extremely pleased and proud that our employees – store manager Mark Woodfield and employee Patricia Keller – played a vital role in preventing a customer from having several thousand dollars stolen from them," said Safeway Eastern Division President Brian Baer. "We have provided extensive training to our retail team urging them to be vigilant in these situations. It is very satisfying to see our efforts being translated into a beneficial outcome on behalf of a valued customer."

Internal Revenue Service Senior Relationship Tax Consultant Anita Carter joined Leggett at this announcement and provided valuable information advising consumers that the IRS does not call consumers and threaten to arrest them if they don't immediately send money.

“These telephone scams are being seen in every part of the country, and we urge people not to be deceived,” said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. “There are clear warning signs about these scams, which continue at high levels throughout the nation. Taxpayers should remember their first contact with the IRS will not be a call from out of the blue, but through official correspondence sent through the mail.”

The local victim has filed a report with the Montgomery County Police Financial Crimes Section. The federal Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) warns that this is the “largest ever” phone fraud scam targeting taxpayers. Victims may file a complaint online at http://www.treasury.gov/tigta/contact_report_scam.shtml.

OCP, the County's consumer protection agency, investigates thousands of complaints each year involving automotive sales and repairs, new home purchases, home improvements, credit issues, retail sales, internet services and most other consumer transactions. OCP provides pre-purchase information to consumers, as well as speakers to the community on consumer issues. For more information, call 240.777.3636 or visit OCP's website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer.