



Dorchester County Sheriff's Office

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James W. Phillips Jr.,
Sheriff

■ COMMUNITY SCAM ALERT ■

The Dorchester County Sheriff's Office alerts our community partners of recent scams targeting our residents — **especially the elderly**. Please share this information with friends, family, and neighbors to help prevent victimization.

SCAM #1 — Virus / Government Agency Scam

You receive a call, text, email, or pop-up claiming a virus was detected. A scammer says your data was hacked and demands payment by **gift cards**. Once card numbers/PINs are shared, funds are immediately transferred and **unrecoverable**.

SCAM #2 — Bond Scam

You are told a loved one was arrested and needs bond posted immediately via Cash App or another online platform. Once sent, the account disappears and the **money is gone**.

SCAM #3 — Debt Scam

An unknown caller claims you owe a debt (PayPal, utilities, etc.) and says the only way to avoid collections or service interruption is to **pay immediately by gift card**.

SCAM #4 — Fine / Impersonation Scam

A caller spoofs the Sheriff's number **(410-228-4141)** claiming you missed court or owe fines, demanding payment by gift cards, CashApp, or Bitcoin. *Law enforcement will NEVER accept gift cards or crypto as payment.*

SCAM #5 — Romance Scam

A stranger befriends you online, mails a cashier's check, and asks you to keep half and buy gift cards with the rest. The check later bounces, leaving **you liable for all funds**. Scammers often use foreign accents or AI-generated voices.

Gift cards have become the **most popular payment method for scammers** — easy to buy, hard to trace, nearly impossible to refund. Cards commonly demanded: Target, Apple, eBay, Google Play, Amazon, and Walmart. **Gift cards are for gifts ONLY — NEVER for payment of debts or services.**

■ POTENTIAL RED FLAGS — STOP AND VERIFY

1. Asked to pay by gift card for services that should accept traditional payment.
2. Caller creates a sense of urgency or an unexpected emergency.
3. Instructed to stay on the phone while purchasing gift cards.
4. Directed to buy easily obtainable gift cards at convenience stores or pharmacies.
5. Told that gift cards will protect your banking account information.
6. Asked to cash a check then place the cash at a secret location and leave.

If you believe you are being scammed — **HANG UP**. Contact the **Dorchester County Sheriff's Office** at **(410) 228-4141** or your nearest law enforcement agency. **Remember: If it seems too good to be true — it's likely a SCAM.**