

Dave Beaumont

From: William Britt [William.Britt@ventura.org]
Sent: Wednesday, March 09, 2011 12:31 PM
To: William Britt
Subject: Scams and more Scams

City watch and Neighborhood watch,

Door to door salesman and telemarketers are on the prowl again. Recently I was contacted by a resident and business owner of Camarillo who reported two separate incidents that could have been a scam.

Telemarketers

In the first instance a business owner was contacted on the telephone by a person who claimed to be from the State Health Department. The caller told the business owner that he was sending inspectors to her restaurant tomorrow, and she needed to provide him with a telephone number. The caller told the business owner she would be receiving a phone call with a code and that she needed to provide this code to the him. The phone number that called her with a code was 415-366-0260. The business owner provided the code to the caller and then he asked her if she had anymore phone numbers she could give him because he needed to get another code for the second inspector. The business owner did not have another phone number so the caller ended the conversation with the business owner.

A quick Internet search of the phone number 415-366-0260 showed people who had received similar phone calls from a man pretending to be a health inspector, a customer service rep, and a government employee. In all of the complaints, the caller told recipients the same information as what the above business owner received. It appears the caller is targeting businesses. Further investigation showed that this "caller" is trying to circumvent a Craigslist security feature to open a new account.

Taken from the Craigslist website http://www.craigslist.org/about/help/phone_authentication

In some situations, users may be required to set up a craigslist user account (or log in to an existing account) to submit new posts. In addition, a valid working phone number may be required so that we can verify your account. Phone authorization is used to help enforce the terms of use.

How does it work?

In the authentication process, you will be prompted to enter your phone number. Shortly after, you will receive an automated phone call or text message (SMS) that contains an authorization code. Enter this code on the next page of the process, and your account will be verified."

So, the scam is the caller is using the recipients phone number to set up a phony Craigslist account and then is using the recipient to give him the code that Craigslist sends out to verify the account. In the incident in Camarillo, the business owner did not have a Craigslist account.

Advice - Never give out personal information to telemarketers or callers who initiate the call to you. A state health inspector would never ask a business owner to call another number to get a code to set up a health inspection. Don't hesitate to hang up if you feel suspicious or unsure of whom you are speaking with. Remember it is not a crime to hang up on someone, even me!

DOOR To DOOR salesperson

In the second incident a Camarillo resident had a door to door salesperson contact her at her residence selling books and magazine subscriptions. The salesperson was very charming (as they usually are) and the resident eventually bought approximately \$50.00 in books. During the sales pitch the resident had a nagging feeling that she might be getting scammed. The resident wrote a check to Dynasty Sales to the salesperson. A short while later the resident did some research on the company and found other people who had been scammed out of money for goods they never received. The resident immediately canceled the check.

Advice - First, the City of Camarillo has a Municipal Code that makes it a misdemeanor for people to solicit door to door without a permit. If you are ever contacted by a door to door salesperson, ask to see their permit. If they refuse to show it to you or tell you they don't have it, please contact the Police Department at 654-9511.

Second, if you are unsure of a company you are thinking of doing business with, you can research them with the Better Business Bureau (BBB), website <http://www.bbb.org/>

After receiving this call from the resident I researched this company on the website and the BBB gave the business an "F" (grading system goes from an A+ to F). According to the BBB website the following factors are considered when grading a company -

What are BBB Ratings?

"BBB assigns ratings by evaluating businesses in the following categories:

- ⌘ BBB experience with the industry in which the business operates*
- ⌘ The business' length of time in operation*
- ⌘ Whether BBB has information that the business does not have required competency license*
- ⌘ Any known government actions against the business that are related to marketplace activities*
- ⌘ Any advertising issues found by BBB*
- ⌘ The number of complaints received by BBB from the business' customers*
- ⌘ The number of complaints received by BBB from the business' customers that are of a serious nature*
- ⌘ Whether the business has responded to complaints received by BBB*
- ⌘ Whether complaints have been resolved in a timely manner or the business has demonstrated it made a good faith effort to resolve them*
- ⌘ Business' overall complaint history with BBB*
- ⌘ Whether the business has failed to resolve the underlying cause(s) of a pattern of complaints*
- ⌘ Whether the business has honored any commitments to BBB to arbitrate or mediate disputes and comply with arbitrator decisions and mediated settlements*
- ⌘ Whether BBB has sufficient background information and clear understanding of business*
- ⌘ Whether BBB Accreditation was revoked because the business failed to comply with agreed BBB standards*

Ratings are determined by a proprietary formula that represents BBB's opinion as to (1) the importance of each category, and (2) the appropriate score given to the business for each category.

BBB assigns grades from A to F with pluses and minuses. A+ is the highest grade and F is the lowest. The grade represents BBB's degree of confidence that the business is operating in a trustworthy manner and will make a good faith effort to resolve any customer concerns filed with BBB."

The reasons BBB gave Dynasty Sales an "F" was for, "

BBB does not have sufficient information to determine how long this business has been operating

51 complaints filed against business

2 complaints filed against business that were not resolved

Length of time business has taken to resolve complaint(s)

BBB does not have sufficient background information on this business. BBB made one or more requests for background information from the business. BBB has not received a response from this business and/or has not been able to verify information received from this business.

Factor(s) that raised this business' rating include:

Response to 51 complaint(s) filed against business.

Bottom Line - Scammers and con artists are always on the prowl. We must educate ourselves and try to trust our gut instinct in order to protect ourselves from these and other scams like it. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the Camarillo Police Department.

Sean

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