



Start With Trust[®]

Scams Against Older Adults

BBB Serving Western VA

Important Resources

- **The Federal Trade Commission**
1.877.382.4357
ftc.gov
- **National Do Not Call List**
1.888.382.1222
donotcall.gov
- **AARP**
1.888.687.2277
- **Free Credit Report Once a Year**
1.877.322.8228
annualcredit-report.com
- **Social Security Fraud Hotline**
ssa.gov
1.800.269.0271
- **Medicare Hotline**
1.800.633.4227

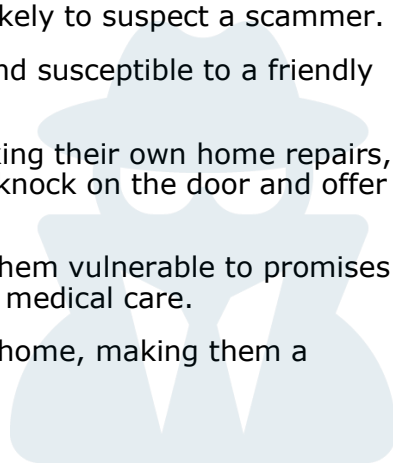
Every day, scammers bombard the telephones, mailboxes, e-mails, and social media accounts of older Americans.

In addition to the newer kinds of fraud, older adults continue to be victimized by age-old scams such as fraudulent lotteries, shoddy home improvement work, and investment schemes promising high returns. In many instances, older Americans' homes, life savings, and assets are lost due to these crimes. To compound the problem, the victims are often reluctant to report the crime out of embarrassment or fear that they will lose control over their affairs.

WHY ARE SENIORS TARGETED AND VULNERABLE?

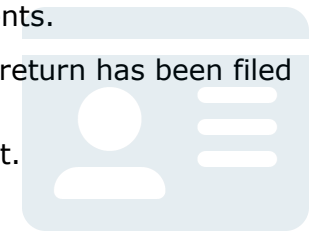
There are a number of reasons why older adults are targeted by scammers:

- They are more likely to be at home to answer the door or telephone.
- They tend to be more trusting and less likely to suspect a scammer.
- They are often seeking companionship and susceptible to a friendly pitch.
- They may be physically incapable of making their own home repairs, exposing them to itinerant workers who knock on the door and offer to do repairs cheaply.
- They may be on fixed incomes, making them vulnerable to promises of high investment returns or savings on medical care.
- They may live on their own or own their home, making them a target of predatory lenders.



Signs that you're being scammed or your identity has been stolen.

- Regular bills stop or showing up in the mail, or you receive new ones that you didn't authorize.
- Unusual withdrawals or charges on bank statements.
- The IRS rejects your tax return or informs you a return has been filed on your behalf.
- You are surprised by being denied a loan or credit.
- You are suddenly denied medical coverage.
- Your credit score inexplicably improves or deteriorates.



BBB Serving Western VA

5115 Bernard Drive
Suite 202

Roanoke, VA 24018

540.342.3455

info@roanoke.bbb.org

BBB.org

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON SCAMS

LOTTERIES AND SWEEPSTAKES

You receive a call or email advising that you have won a prize, but have to send money upfront to pay taxes and fees. Lotteries requiring you to pay upfront are illegal. You may even receive a check as partial payment, but the check will be a forgery.

DOOR-TO-DOOR SALES

A person shows up uninvited at your door offering to make repairs or sell you product "cheap". They do shoddy work at an exorbitant price or you find the product is not as promised, or leave with the money and provide no product or service.

TELEMARKETING SCHEMES

You receive a call offering a great deal on a product but have to act now to get the benefit. The caller asks for personal and financial information that will then be used to drain your accounts or run up charges on your credit card.

PHISHING

A legitimate-looking e-mail advertises there is an issue with an account, providing a hyperlink to another site to put in personal information to verify it's you to fix the problem. Scammers can spoof logos and emails to get your information.

PHONY CHARITIES You receive a phone call or personal visit from someone soliciting money for what sounds like a legitimate charity, but is really a scam. Often they appear to be associated with the police or fire departments.

ROMANCE SCAMS

Scammers pose as potential matches for adults looking for love. They shower their victims with attention, inevitably asking for money accompanied by a heart-wrenching story. The victims will usually then send the money via wire transfers or gift cards.

GRANDPARENT SCAM

A scammer, posing as a grandchild, calls and explains that they have gotten into trouble, such as a car accident or put in jail, and needs help. Victims often are also contacted by someone claiming to be a police officer or lawyer representing the grandchild in court.

INVESTMENT OR HEALTHCARE SCAMS

You receive a call, letter, or e-mail offering above-market returns on investments or great savings on medical care.

BEREAVEMENT SCAMS

Scammers will also try to take advantage those who have recently lost a loved one. Scammers find targets by scouring obituaries, claiming that their spouse had outstanding debts that needed to be paid immediately. Victims then provide a blank check or credit card.

What Should You Do To Protect Yourself?

- **Check with BBB** before dealing with any company or charity that you are not familiar with. Also check with family members, neighbors or friends.
- **Don't do business with someone who just shows up at your door.**
- **Don't give personal or financial information** to an unknown caller, and don't provide such information for unsolicited e-mail/Internet messages. Don't click on links or open attachments.
- If you need to hire a contractor or repairman, make sure the contractor is properly licensed. **Ask BBB for a list of accredited businesses.**
- **Don't yield to high-pressure or emotional sales tactics.** Read contracts thoroughly and seek advice if you don't understand it.
- **Never pay money to win a prize** or enter a sweepstakes, even if you are sent a check and told to make the payment from that check.
- **Never pay the entire cost of a repair job upfront.** Try not to pay more than a third.
- **Keep careful records** of your transactions such as bank or credit card statement.
- **Have Social Security or pension benefit checks direct deposited** to reduce the possibility of ID theft.
- **Shred all paperwork** with personal information before you discard them.