

SCAM ALERT: Leavenworth County Attorney Todd Thompson warns people about a scam targeting families of inmates

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LEAVENWORTH, Kan. --- Leavenworth County Attorney Todd Thompson and local law enforcement are warning the community about a troubling scam in which fraudsters might utilize online inmate rosters to help deceive and financially exploit families. These scammers appear to be specifically targeting relatives of individuals who have recently appeared in court, received bond amounts, or been listed as inmates on the Leavenworth County Sheriff's online booking log.

In the most recent incident, within an hour of a defendant's court appearance, a family member receives a phone call from an individual claiming to be a Leavenworth County Sheriff's deputy. Using a "ghost" number to hide their true identity, the caller falsely informs the family member that a payment smaller than the \$50,000 bond set by the District Court Judge is available. The scammer then explains that for a fee of \$4,500, the court is willing to release the defendant, but an ankle bracelet would be necessary – the \$4,500 fee is charged to cover the ankle bracelet expense. The scammer stated payment could be conducted via telephone from a bank draft.

Leavenworth County Attorney Todd Thompson explained how the victim narrowly escaped being scammed out of money.

"The defendant's father, the victim in this attempted scam, had attended the defendant's bond hearing just an hour before receiving the call. Knowing that the \$4,500 fee was significantly less than the mandated court bond, he called his local police department asking for advice." Thompson continued, "When in doubt, always call a trusted source before making any form of payment online or over the phone. This man likely saved himself thousands of dollars by making that one call to the police department."

Authorities believe these scammers could be actively monitoring online jail logs to identify recent appearances and bond amounts. This would allow them to craft convincing and deceptive messages to pressure families into making quick payments under false pretenses.

"This method of scamming people – which appears to be a new form of scams that utilize online court and jail information - targets families in vulnerable situations," said Thompson. "We want to make it absolutely clear that law enforcement does not call families to request upfront payments for bond reductions or ankle monitor expenses."

How to Protect Yourself:

- **Verify Information:** If you receive such a call, use the official contact information to contact the police, the jail, or the court directly.
- **Beware of Urgency:** Scammers often create a sense of urgency to pressure victims into immediate payments.
- **Never Pay Over the Phone:** Legitimate bond payments must be made through official channels, never via phone transactions.
- **Report Suspicious Calls:** If you receive a call like this, immediately report it to your local law enforcement agency.