



Department of Justice

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SCAM ALERT: CALLER USING RUSE INVOLVING FEDERAL JURY DUTY IN ATTEMPT TO VICTIMIZE UTAHNS

SALT LAKE CITY – You answer your phone this week to hear a caller tell you that you failed to appear on a summons for jury duty in federal court in Salt Lake City. The caller, who identifies himself using a variation of the name of the clerk of the court, tells you that a warrant will be issued for your arrest.

The caller, who is talking to you late in the afternoon, says you have until 5 p.m. to put more than \$400 on a MoneyPak card (a reloadable debit card available at many retail stores) and call him back with the MoneyPak serial number to avoid being arrested.

Frightened at the thought of officers putting handcuffs on you at work, you get the MoneyPak and call the person back to give him the serial number. Before you realize what has happened, your money and the scammer are gone into a world of untraceable deception.

Utahns are being targeted by this scheme this week .

Law enforcement agencies and other consumer protection groups say there has been a significant increase in schemes where fraudsters try to collect payments using a MoneyPak. When the serial number of the card is given to someone or falls into the hands of a scammer, the scammer has instant access to your money and can drain the money from your card. Unlike a credit card, the transaction is untraceable and cannot be reversed or challenged. The best advice, consumer advocates say, is to never give a MoneyPak serial number to anyone you don't know.

U.S. District Court officials say none of the individuals who reported receiving these calls were actually called for jury duty, something these individuals could have discovered had they called the court when they received the initial call, as some individuals have done.

Individuals who are called for jury duty receive a summons to appear in the mail or by e-mail. If they fail to appear for jury duty, a court official will contact them to determine why they failed to appear. Individuals are never fined for non-appearance without receiving an order from the court directing them to appear before the judge, the opportunity to explain their non-

appearance to the judge, and a written order from the court setting the amount of the fine. Most importantly, payment of a fine is never demanded by a telephone call.

U.S. Attorney David Barlow encourages Utahns to be on guard for fraud schemes involving the use of MoneyPaks. "Don't give the serial number to someone you don't know and to anyone calling you. Our best advice is to hang up and call the agency or business yourself. As we are seeing with the individuals who were solicited as a part of the jury-duty scheme, those who called the court found out the calls were fraudulent. While there are legitimate uses for these cards, if you are not cautious you end up giving crooks immediate access to your money."

"Scammers are constantly dreaming up new ways to take your money," warned Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, "Always be very cautious if someone demands you pay a fine or a fee by wire transfer or by placing funds on a MoneyPak debit card. If you are unsure, check with the brick and mortar location of the government agency by phone or in person before responding to any financial demands made over the phone."

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