

WALMART/TARGET POSTCARD SCAM RETURNS

Something turned up in the mail this week, which we've not seen for several years here. Several years ago, many people turned over postcards to me which they received through the US Mail. These postcards notified their recipients, they won a \$100 giftcard, for use at Target or Walmart. To receive the card, the recipients needed to call a number. And if they did, they found out they needed to pay a small fee for "shipping". To pay, they needed to furnish a credit card number.

But folks in this area stopped receiving these about 2015. Now, thanks to a man in Fulton, Illinois, we know this postcard scam is back. The Fulton man showed me a bright yellow postcard he received, titled "FINAL NOTICE". The card notified him of a \$100 giftcard for Target or Walmart, and provided a phone number to call to claim the card.

I called the number, and spoke to a man with a strong Indian accent. He linked the nine-digit "release code" on the card to the Fulton man's name and address. He wanted a Mastercard or VISA card number, to charge a \$4.95 "one-time" shipping and activation fee. Well, he didn't get one from me.

This is a clever ruse to trick us into revealing credit card numbers, and confirming what name and address to which they link. This makes it pretty easy for crook to make an online purchase using that credit card. Don't fall for this – no one is giving away Walmart or Target gift cards.

NEW MEDICARE CARDS

I reported on this before, but a reminder is due. Everyone covered by Medicare will receive a new Medicare card by sometime in 2019. The old cards used your social security number as the Medicare account number. That will change. Medicare will create new numbers and send out new cards. This is free, and will come by mail to the address of record with the Social Security Administration. If you need to update your address with Social Security, call 800-772-1213.

You don't need to do anything to get this card, but be aware you may receive phone calls from scammers who will ask you to "confirm" or "verify" the card, ask for bank information, or pay something for it. Don't talk to these people.

The rollout schedule published by Medicare shows us the first replacement cards go to those living in the Middle Atlantic states, or on the West Coast, Alaska, and Hawaii. In our area, you'll need to wait until June 2018, or later.

FAKE FACEBOOK ACCOUNTS

Facebook is popular. The social media website tells us 214 million people in the US use this social media platform. That's about two-thirds of the population. It's a majority, but not everyone. A lot of folks tell me they lack interest in Facebook, or fear it, and plan to stay away. Well, despite their lack of interest, they might have an account anyway.

I know this because a couple living in western Clinton County called about this very thing. The couple, whom I'll call Bill and Carol, told me they found a fake account on Facebook in Bill's name. Bill stays away from Facebook, and computers in general. Carol, however, does maintain a Facebook account. One evening, she browsed Facebook, looking at the profiles of anyone with her last name, which is unusual in the US. To her surprise and dismay, she found an account in her husband Bill's name. The vanity name, which is what you call yourself on Facebook, included Bill's full name, and his professional title, from a profession from which he retired. This appeared as a business profile, indicating he ran a bed and breakfast (he never did). The profile reported Bill and Carol's actual address and phone number.

Our review of the profile showed several dozen people used Bill's account to send each other messages, going back a year ago. And even more curious, from what we saw on those posting messages, these users lived in North Africa, and wrote in a foreign language and script.

What should we make of this? We don't know – yet. We are looking to find who established this account, and what they gained from it. It seems someone who did not want to broadcast their own identity is up to some kind of skullduggery.

Even if you never used Facebook, consider asking someone you know who does, to check Facebook and see if someone set a profile in your name anyway.

CONTACT SENIORS VS. CRIME

Let me know about scams, fraud, or other crookedness you run across. Most of what I learn, I learn from you. Contact me at Seniors vs. Crime, Clinton County Sheriff's Office, 563-242-9211 extension 4433, or email me at randymeier@gapa911.us.

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