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OLD TELEPHONE SCAM USES NEW TRICK

BISMARCK, ND – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem warned North Dakotans that an old telephone scam has resurfaced in North Dakota, but with a new twist; the scam artists are spoofing the real customer service number of a North Dakota bank.

The scam is a variation of the old “security alert” phishing calls, in which a recorded message, claiming to be from a financial institution, warns that the account (or bank card) has been locked and the account holder must provide confidential information before the account (or card) will be unlocked. Stenehjem’s office issued warnings about this type of phishing scam in 2012 and again in 2013.

“The best way to respond to these calls is to simply hang up,” said Stenehjem. “Never give out any personal information in response to a call claiming your account has been locked,” he continued.

In the last two weeks, the scam artists have been claiming to be from Gate City Bank, but Stenehjem warns that each time this scam surfaces and warnings are issued, the scam artists simply use the name of another bank in the hope they can continue to find victims.

Although they are located overseas, the scam artists use “spoofing” technology to display a phone number that is not the one they are actually using, in this instance, the customer service number for Gate City Bank, in the hope that it fools people long enough to convince them to reveal their bank account information.

“These simply are robo-calls to thousands of telephone subscribers, hoping to get lucky and strike victims that will disclose their confidential information,” said Stenehjem.

Many foreign countries, such as Nigeria, use the same ten-digit direct dialing telephone system as the United States. This makes it easy for the scam artists to use robo-dialers to dial thousands of 10-digit numbers a day. Unfortunately, because the calls display a spoofed number, it is almost impossible for enforcement agencies to track the actual originating telephone number and put a stop to the calls.

Parrell Grossman, director of the Consumer Protection division, reminds North Dakotans that banks and other financial institutions will never require you to provide bank account passwords or to enter your bank account number. He also urged consumers not to “play along” with the scam artist, because that may result in even more scam calls.

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