



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Beware of Tech Support Scams

August 6, 2019 - Protect yourself. Be on guard for the bad guys who try to trick you into believing you have a serious problem with your computer. They often try to make you think you have a virus or other computer issue, and have you pay for services you don't need.

"We have seen an increase in members falling victim to tech support scams," reports Brittany Leeper, Fraud Prevention Manager at Interra Credit Union, Goshen.

The fraudsters call unsuspecting victims and pretend to be computer technicians from a reputable software company. What makes it especially difficult to detect is they may even spoof the caller ID so it displays as a legitimate number from the company. The scammers request access to your computer so they can deposit the "refund" into your account through online banking. They will then put viruses on your computer to gain access to your online accounts and make fake deposits for too much money. In order to give that money back to the scammer, they request payment, often in the form of gift cards.

Another means by which they attack their victims is by displaying fake error messages on websites, often as pop-ups with support numbers, trying to trick the user into calling a phone number. The pop-up may even show the logo of a well-known provider. In Microsoft's online information regarding tech support scams, for example, it states that their legitimate error and warning messages never include phone numbers.

If you think you have fallen prey to a tech support scam, what should you do?

- Unplug your computer immediately, not just power off.
- Alert your financial institution that you may have a possible online account takeover.
- Cancel any credit or debit cards that may be compromised.
- Call a computer company you trust.

"It's so important to change your username and password immediately if you gave that information to the fake technician," she added. "And, if you used that same username and password for other accounts, change them, too."

“It may also be a good idea to update your computer’s security software,” Leeper noted. “Then run a scan and delete anything the scan identified as a problem.”

The Federal Trade Commission provides information on tech support scams, “How to Spot, Avoid and Report Tech Support Scams.” It provides these helpful tips:

- Don’t click on any links or call a phone number.
- Don’t send any money or make a wire transfer.
- Don’t pay with a gift card.
- Don’t give anyone your financial account numbers, credit card or other payment information.
- Don’t give anyone control of your computer.
- Legitimate companies do not display pop-up warnings that ask you to call a toll-free number about viruses or security problems.

“If you need tech support, it’s important to rely on a company you know and trust,” Leeper pointed out.