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*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Elderly Scams¹

Rebecca McGovney and Mary Harrison²

Almost 10 million Americans were victims of identity theft in 2003, according to the Federal Trade Commission. As the caregiver to an older relative, it is important to know what type of scams target your relative, and how to stop them from happening.

UF Family, Youth and Community Sciences professor Mary Harrison says many older people are targeted for scams because they are easily accessible by phone and by direct contact, tend to be isolated at home, and may find it hard to say no.

Common scams include home repair cons; sweepstakes, contests, and "free" prizes; telemarketing and investment frauds; quick fixes for health problems; as well as counterfeit charities. Be alert to the type of phone calls, mail and e-mail your relative is receiving and have your relative contact their local Better Business Bureau before giving money to any organization.

Identify theft is also a popular scam against the elderly. Help your relative protect their credit card and bank account numbers by properly disposing of bills and receipts. Advise them to never give out this type of information over the phone or through e-mail conversations.

1. This document is FAR6004, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. First published December 2007. Reviewed December 2010. In the interest of time or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Please visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Rebecca McGovney, graduate student, and Mary Harrison, professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

Many times scam artists try to play on the emotions of the elderly, Harrison says. Sitting down to discuss these types of scams with your relative can keep them from becoming a victim.

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To listen to the radio broadcast:

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/elderlyscams.mp3

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/elderlyscams.wav

References

Federal Trade Commission. (2003). FTC releases survey of identity theft in U.S.: 27.3 million victims in past 5 years, billions in losses for businesses and consumers. Retrieved October 2007, from <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2003/09/idtheft.shtm>

Federal Trade Commission, 2003