

The Rancho Mirage Police Department is warning the public of the Green Dot MoneyPak scam that is making headlines across the nation.

In case you haven't heard of it, the Green Dot MoneyPak is a prepaid card usually used by people who don't have bank accounts. The cards are available at retail stores like Walmart and CVS. They can be loaded with up to \$500 at most retailers or \$1,000 if used at Walmart, and then used to shop online or to add money to a PayPal account.

Prepaid card scams aren't anything new but many are unaware of them. The most recent cases have involved a fraudster calling and pretending to be from the warrants department of a local police agency, a representative of a utilities company, or an agent from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. The victim is told that he has a warrant for an unpaid fine or is in default for a debt and must pay immediately to avoid arrest. The victim is then told to buy a Green Dot MoneyPak card, load it with a specific amount of cash, and transfer the serial number to the fraudster who then transfers the money to another card.

Scam artists prefer to use the Green Dot MoneyPak card because it isn't linked to a bank account and just like cash, it's untraceable. Unlike cash, though, the transaction can be done over the phone, so it's totally anonymous, making it just about impossible to catch the criminal. Also, the card offers no consumer protection from fraud, so the victim isn't getting the money back.

In addition to never giving personal information to an unsolicited caller, the Rancho Mirage Police recommend the following tips:

1. Be suspicious of callers who demand immediate payment for any reason.
2. Be wary of anyone who calls on the phone trying to collect a debt. Look up the phone number of the organization the caller claims to represent (not the number on the caller ID) and check on your account.
3. Keep in mind that many organizations don't accept payment via prepaid card. Be wary of anyone who's asking for this type of payment.

If you believe you've been the victim of a Green Dot MoneyPak scam, call the Rancho Mirage Police on the non-emergency dispatch line at (760) 836-3215.

For more information regarding this or other scams, contact Crime Prevention Officer Codi Mix at (760) 340-5359 or [cmix@riversidesheriff.org](mailto:cmix@riversidesheriff.org).