

San Antonio workshop offers seniors tips to detect scams

By Vincent T. Davis, Staff Writer | May 7, 2018 | Updated: May 7, 2018 7:39pm

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IMAGE 1 OF 10

San Antonio Police detective David Brinkman talks about strategies con artists are using to scam seniors by email, phone, postal mail and home visits in a Monday workshop to help seniors detect scams at the ... [more](#)

Robert “Crow” Perez said he learned about scams targeting seniors when a fake contractor showed up at his door offering to reshingle his roof. He said the man asked for \$500 upfront to buy materials for the roofing work. Perez, 75, said he knew he’d never see the man again if he would have given him any cash.

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“I told him no,” he said. “And I said if you don’t have the money to do the job, we can go and I’ll give you so much and you give me a receipt — along with my change.”

Perez was on the right track. But he learned more tips he could have used when he attended a senior scam-prevention class Monday morning at the **Doris Griffin Senior One-Stop Center**, near **Ingram Park Mall**.

Perez was one of 22 senior center members who listened closely as David Brinkman, a detective with the **San Antonio Police Department**, stressed the importance of being alert, especially since scams targeting their group are on the rise.

“It’s going to happen,” he said, “there’s nothing you can do but be cautious.”

According to news reports, senior citizens lost \$37 billion in

To illustrate one of the ways scammers target seniors, Brinkman said the older generation pays thousands of dollars a year for services they never received a loud re

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He said scammers look for signs to find seniors to target, such as cars in driveways with handicap plates and well-maintained homes.

To combat the efforts, Brinkman said, seniors should always be suspicious of unsolicited calls.

But Brinkman warned that criminals commit financial fraud through a variety of means in addition to phone calls, including email, postal mail and personal visits.

Call and verify credentials of law enforcement investigators and utility workers.

Get everything in writing for business transactions.

Don't leave important and financial information in outside mailboxes.

Mail financial payments through the post office and not your mailbox.

Report scams and fraud at [AARP Foundation ElderWatch](#).

He told the group that the government would never call or send threatening emails that they owed agencies money, nor should they ever click on an email attachment or give out their names.

Administrator Peaches Hall said the class, sponsored by [WellMed](#), is part of the center's ongoing program to sharpen seniors' scam-detection skills and make it harder for scammers' ploys to work on them.

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“They’re like, ‘Omigosh, I don’t have novellas, I don’t have my news,’” she said. “Sixty-six dollars doesn’t sound like a lot of money unless you times that by the population of seniors here.”

Center member Rosa Ramos, 71, said she learned that it’s getting worse rather than better and that she needs to be more alert.

“We hear it, but coming to a class kind of reaffirms what you’re not supposed to be doing,” she said. “It’s good for us, it helps.”

Brinkman left the group with these words of advice: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

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