**Analyst Comment:** These scams are also known as Jury Scams and have been going on for many years. Other variations of this scam include perpetrators posing as a US Marshal, court officer, or law enforcement official seeking to collect fines in lieu of arrest for failure to report to jury duty. Newer technology provides scammers with more avenues to easily perpetrate schemes while remaining anonymous. It is often the elderly or people with a limited understanding of the court systems that fall victim to this scam.

Across Minnesota, scammers are posing as federal court officials, law enforcement entities, and US Marshals as they call members of the public, allege that they or their family members have an active federal arrest warrant, and demand the immediate payment of fines to avoid arrest.

In this type of ruse, scammers frequently obtain a phone number through Google Voice, which allows people to create any phone number they want for themselves in any area code, so long as that number is not currently assigned to someone else. Further, it is relatively easy to generate a phone number through Google Voice as scammers only need to provide a valid email address, which can also be created easily. Generally, the first six numbers of government offices are the same agency-wide, such as (555) 555-xxxx. Knowing this, scammers generate their own phone number with the first six digits of the agency they claim to represent and the last four numbers randomly generated. The anonymity provided by the fake phone numbers, email addresses, and IP addresses allows scammers to confidently carry out fraudulent acts without their actions being traced back to them.

Prior to making a phone call, the scammer does a public records search so s/he can refer to the person by name and state the victim’s home address. The scammer either leaves a message or speaks directly to whomever answers the phone. At this time, the scammer tells the potential victim that s/he is a Deputy United States Marshal (DUSM) or other law enforcement or court official and that it is urgent that the person immediately pay their fine to avoid arrest. To appear more credible, the scammer may provide additional information, such as badge numbers, the names of federal judges, and/or courthouse addresses. The scammer then tells the victim to meet him/her at the US Courthouse or other legitimate location to settle their debt. This use of a legitimate government address helps convince victims of the scammer’s legitimacy. In all cases, the scammer ends up canceling this meeting and instead tells the victim to purchase a pre-paid credit card, generally a GreenDot card. The scammer then instructs the victim to provide the card and PIN number to him/her over the phone to satisfy the fine and eliminate the active warrant. Once the scammer has both the card and PIN number, s/he has access to the victim’s money.

Scammers generally focus on one geographical area at a time. When word gets out about the scam, the scammers create a new email address, generate a new Google Voice number, and gather local law enforcement and court information for a new area.

The US Marshals Service is a federal law enforcement agency and does not seek payment of fines or fees via the telephone for individuals with outstanding arrest warrants. A federal court will never threaten an individual or demand the immediate payment – either over the phone or via money wire service – for fines or for not responding to jury summons. Further, please note that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is in charge of the collection of federal tax debts. To check for any outstanding federal tax debt, contact the IRS at (800) 913-6050 and view their collection process.

The US Marshals Service urges individuals not to divulge personal or financial information to unknown callers, even if they appear to be legitimate, and highly recommends the public report similar crimes to their local police office if they are the victims of fraud.

It is a serious crime for a person to falsely represent him or herself as a federal official. If you receive a phone call similar to that described above, the US Marshals Service urges you to hang up and contact your local court clerk’s office or US Marshals Service office to check for any potential charges or warrants. Contact information for federal courts may be found through the US Courts court locator at [www.uscourts.gov/court-locator](http://www.uscourts.gov/court-locator). For internet related fraud, the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center can be contacted at [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov). Additional information about the US Marshals Service can be found out at [http://www.usmarshals.gov](http://www.usmarshals.gov).

**Sources:** Multiple open sources and USMS Reports