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Rockland County TRIAD Program

Reducing Crimes Against Seniors

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THE PIGEON DROP OR "FOUND MONEY" SCAM



This crime very often occurs in a mall or shopping area. Normally, two female confidence operators will play the victim, who is usually an older female. On rare occasions, one or both of the con players may be males.

In one scenario, a well-dressed younger woman will approach the selected *mark* (intended victim). The younger woman will claim she has just found a bag, briefcase or envelope and ask the intended victim about the ownership.

In a second possible scenario, the targeted victim will be approached by a younger female who will casually start talking to the victim, attempting to befriend her by chatting about children or grandchildren. A third woman will then approach and claim to be looking for the owner of a bag or envelope she claimed to have just found, or, asking "*Did either of you drop this envelope full of money?*"

When the three look inside the bag for identification, they find what appears to be a large amount of cash with some indication or a note indicating the source of the found money is from an illegal activity, such as illicit gambling or narcotics sales. There is no label or identification present in the bag or envelope and the likelihood is that whoever lost the money probably came by it dishonestly and cannot claim it. So, after all three converse, returning the money to the owner is ruled out as an option.

The scheme now unfolds where the victim now believes that the two con women have really found a bag containing thousands of dollars and they want to share it with her.

First they will talk excitedly about how much money is in the bag and what each could do with the money if it was hers, skillfully drawing the victim into the benefits of the scheme.

One of the two younger women will probably claim that she works for a local lawyer or an accountant and he will know what to do with the lost money. They then try to draw the victim further into the process.

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A phone call is made on the spot by one of the players and the victim is then told by con artists that she has consulted with her boss and he stated that if they want to share the money they will have to show proof that they have sufficient funds to support themselves during the time the boss supposedly complies with the law by seeking the true owner. The con artist will claim that her boss recommends that each person put up a certain amount of money of their own:

- to provide evidence of “individual financial responsibility”, as good faith.
- to show that all those involved are acting above-board.

The victim withdraws a large amount of cash from her bank and is instructed to place it in the bag with the found money and other "good faith" money supposedly already deposited in the bag by the two con women.

They then use a variety of tactics to dump the victim.

The one who claims to work for a lawyer or accountant offers to take the victim’s money to her boss and then returns, saying the lawyer wants to talk to the victim. They give the victim a name and address of the boss, which turns out to be bogus.

In a second scenario, the victim may be asked to take the bag containing the money to the bosses’ office while the con women park the car or go to the bathroom. Out of the victim’s sight, they have previously switched the bag for a duplicate one containing strips of paper of similar weight.

The victim - a **pigeon** - gets **dropped**.....holding a bag of paper scraps – thus the name of the game. The victim not only loses the hope of a quick profit, but also all of her own money.

In many instances, this crime proliferates because victims, who fear being labeled as incompetent, fail to report it to the police. Even if you are approached by con artists attempting to entice you into this game and you don’t participate.....**report it to the police**. You might save the next person from becoming a victim and losing their life savings.

HEAR THIS!!!STRANGERS ARE NOT LIKELY TO CONFIDE IN OTHER STRANGERS REGARDING FOUND MONEY OR OFFER TO SHARE THEIR GOOD FORTUNE WITH YOU.