

ESTATE UPDATE

THE ESTATE PLANNING & LEGAL NEWSLETTER OF THE LAW OFFICE OF SJOSTROM, LOFTHUS & ROUSAR, PLLP

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SCAMS . . . Who is looking out for you and protecting you?

The old adage “*Don’t believe everything you read in the newspaper*” may need to be updated in this 21st century to “*Don’t believe everything you read on the internet.*” As technology changes, the false information people pass off as factual can be quickly distributed among many good intentioned people who believe they have good information to share with their friends and family.

In the same way, many good intentioned people are being taken advantage of by scam artists who appear sincere, friendly or authoritative in the deception. Since a number of our clients have either heard of or been victims of numerous types of scams, we decided to devote this issue of *Estate Update* to reminding our clients how to protect themselves from scams.

In the most simple terms we can state - **the key to protecting yourself from becoming the victim of a scam is to never give out any personal information when you receive an unsolicited phone call, e-mail or visitor to your home.**

Many government agencies are taking the issue of scams so seriously, they are warning the public to protect themselves. Here are a few examples of their warnings:

IRS Warns of New E-Mail and Telephone Scams Using the IRS

Name: “Some people have received phone calls about the economic stimulus payments, in which the caller impersonates an IRS employee. The caller asks the taxpayer for their Social Security and bank account numbers, claiming that the IRS needs the information to complete the processing of the taxpayer’s payment. In reality, the IRS uses the information contained on the taxpayer’s tax return to process stimulus payments, rather than contacting taxpayers by phone or e-mail.

“An e-mail claiming to come from the IRS about the “2008 Economic Stimulus Refund” tells recipients to click on a link to fill out a form, apparently for direct deposit of the payment into their bank account.”

SCAMS continued on back . . .

LITTLE SCAMS ARE STILL SCAMS, so be aware.

A company named National Deed Service, Inc. is mailing a letter to homeowners offering to get them a certified copy of their Deed for \$69.50. The letter states that a federal government agency “recommends that property owners should have an official or certified copy of their deed.” This is a scam.

First, most homeowners received the original Deed after it was recorded with the county at the time of their purchase. Second, your Deed was recorded with the County, which makes the Deed a public record. So, the likelihood of you ever needing the original or a certified copy of your Deed is very slim. Third, if you need a certified copy of your deed, it can be obtained from the County Recorder for \$10 at any time.

This Company has been operating all over the county for some time. If you go on the internet and plug the company name into Google, you will find numerous complaints and warnings about this scam.

Do not be taken in by this scam. With the price of gasoline today, this scam is the cost of a tank of gas.

ESTATE PLANNING IS:

TAKING THE NECESSARY TIME TO PROTECT WHAT YOU HAVE SPENT YOUR ENTIRE LIFETIME CREATING.

If you have a **WILL** and it has been more than three years since you have reviewed it, please contact our office for an *ESTATE REVIEW*, the first ½ hour is *FREE*.

If you have a **TRUST** and it has been more than one year since you have reviewed it, please contact our office for an *ESTATE REVIEW*, the first ½ hour is *FREE*.



SJOSTROM, LOFTHUS & ROUSAR, PLLP
ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS AT LAW
801 Twelve Oaks Center Drive - Suite 818
Wayzata, Minnesota 55391-4635

Donald R. Sjostrom 952-475-3611
E-mail dsjostrom@visi.com

Eric R. Rousar 952-475-1001
E-mail erousar@visi.com

Scott W. Lofthus (1956 - 2001) Our colleague & friend

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

SCAMS . . . Who is looking out for you and protecting you?

“This appears to be an identity theft scheme to obtain recipients' personal and financial information so the scammers can clean out their victims' financial accounts. In reality, taxpayers do not have to fill out a separate form to get a stimulus payment or have it directly deposited; all they had to do was file a tax return and provide direct deposit information on the return.” quoted from - <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=178061,00.html>

FBI Warns of Jury Duty Scam: “The phone rings, you pick it up, and the caller identifies himself as an officer of the court. He says you failed to report for jury duty and that a warrant is out for your arrest. You say you never received a notice. To clear it up, the caller says he'll need some information for "verification purposes"- your birth date, social security number, maybe even a credit card number.

“This is when you should hang up the phone. It's a scam. Jury scams have been around for years, but have seen a resurgence in recent months. Communities in more than a dozen states have issued public warnings about cold calls from people claiming to be court officials seeking personal information. As a rule, court officers never ask for confidential information over the phone; they generally correspond with prospective jurors via mail.”

quoted from - http://www.fbi.gov/page2/june06/jury_scams060206.htm

MINNESOTA ATTORNEY GENERAL describes “How to Avoid Scams”

1. Don't do business over the telephone with callers you don't know. That friendly voice on the other end of the line may be a crook.
2. Ask for written materials before you commit yourself to any offer.
3. Before you send any money, check out the company and its offer with the Attorney General's Office or the Better Business Bureau. [*Minnesota Attorney General - 651-296-3353, Better Business Bureau - 651-699-1111*]
4. Don't give your credit card or checking account numbers to someone you don't know.
5. Keep your social security number confidential. [*Don't even carry it with you*]
6. Walk away from a “deal” if you are being pressured to make an immediate decision.”

quoted from - <http://www.ag.state.mn.us/Brochures/pubSeniorsGuidetoFightingFraud.pdf>

DISCLAIMER: The contents of this newsletter are presented as general information and are not intended as legal advice to apply to any person or particular situation. Additionally, be mindful that the law is constantly changing and you should always inquire about the present state of the law in reference to all matters. If you have any questions concerning any matters covered in this newsletter, you should consult with an attorney for legal advice based on the individual circumstances of your situation.