

## **Badge- Related Phone Scams**

By Captain Ed Bailey

Chances are you've received phone calls from police, fire or veterans associations asking you for a contribution.

Many of these groups are deserving of a donation; however the National Association of Attorneys General reports that some of the calls are not legitimate. Preying on people's generosity, NAAG says that unscrupulous telemarketers are lying about their affiliation with law enforcement and firefighting organizations when they solicit donations.

These schemes not only line the pockets of crooks, but they also deprive the real police, fire and veterans groups of needed funds. NAAG has these tips for anyone considering a contribution:

- Ask the caller to identify themselves clearly and whom they represent. If the solicitor refuses, just hang up.
- Check directly with the law enforcement agency before you give. Call the organization to verify that it is currently telemarketing to raise money.
- Ask the caller for written information about the organization. A legitimate charity will provide written information about its mission, how donations will be used, and proof that your donation is tax deductible.
- Watch out for names that resemble legitimate organizations but are somehow different. Some phony charities use names that sound similar to legitimate charities.
- Don't be swayed by emotional appeals and don't give under pressure. Legitimate fundraisers won't push you to give on the spot.
- Be wary of charities offering to send a courier to collect your donation.
- Be skeptical if someone thanks you for a pledge you don't remember making. Some unscrupulous telemarketers use this approach to get your money.
- Be wary of guaranteed sweepstakes winnings in exchange for a contribution. You never have to donate anything to be eligible to win.
- If you are suspicious of an organization, contact the Office of The Attorney General.
- Remember your ultimate defense against any suspicious telemarketers is to just hang up. Don't be afraid to be considered rude!