



FRAUD ALERT

FROM THE OFFICE OF LEE COUNTY SHERIFF MIKE SCOTT

FBI SENDS WARNING OF NEW E-MAIL EXTORTION SCAM

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The Federal Bureau of Investigation is alerting the public about a new e-mail scam circulating the country by criminals using threats of extortion to steal cash from their victims. While at this time the Sheriff's Office is not aware of any local victims of this scheme, we feel it is important for you to know what to do should you receive one of these e-mails in your inbox.

The scam works like this: Individuals receive an e-mail claiming their personal information, such as their name, phone number, address, credit card data and other sensitive details were compromised in one of the recent high-profile data thefts. The scammer threatens to release this information to the "victim's" social media contacts, family, and friends if a "ransom" is not immediately paid. To prevent this from happening, the recipient of the e-mail must make a payment through Bitcoin, a virtual currency transaction that provides a high degree of anonymity. Demands have varied from anywhere between 2 to 5 bitcoins, or approximately \$250 to \$1,200.

The FBI has posted examples of the e-mails on the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) website, www.ic3.gov along with these safety tips:

- Do not open e-mail or attachments from unknown individuals.
- Do not communicate with the subject.
- Do not store sensitive or embarrassing photos of yourself online or on your mobile devices.
- Ensure security settings for social media accounts are turned on and set at the highest level of protection.
- Avoid payment of extortion demands as the funds will facilitate continued criminal activity.

If you believe you have been a victim of this scam, you can file a complaint on the IC3.gov website, contact the local FBI office, or the Sheriff's Office fraud line at 258-3292.