Police warn of text message banking scam

by Cheryl McDermott

BEND, Ore. â€“ Bend police are warning citizens of a new text message scam sent via residentsâ€™ cell phones that are a â€œpfishingâ€• attempt to steal credit card and pin numbers belonging to Bank of the Cascade account holders.

According to Bend Police Sgt. Dan Ritchie, Deschutes County 911 has received numerous calls from Central Oregon residents, including police officers, regarding the suspicious messages.

The messages read, â€œYour Bank of the Cascades Account has been closed due to unusual activity. Call us at 818-237-5717.â€•

When the phone number was called, an automated answering service requests that you enter the credit card and pin numbers to â€œreactivateâ€• your account, Sgt. Ritchie explained.

A call to the number this morning returned a recorded message saying the number is no longer in service.

Police investigators confirmed the message is a scam and not associated with the bank, and information from the bank has not been compromised, Ritchie said. The messages were sent to a list of cell phone numbers from Central Oregon account holders, and were also sent to persons who have no connection with that particular bank. The cell phone number list came from an unknown source, the sergeant said.

â€œDo not enter your personal information!â€• Ritchie warned, adding that banks and financial institutions do not generally solicit information via text message.

â€œAlso be extremely cautious of suspicious phone calls or emails that solicit your personal information. In the wake of technology, scam artist have become more sophisticated and can generate some convincing emails with detailed company graphics,â€• he said.

â€œRule of thumb,â€• Ritchie continued, â€œif you receive any suspicious communications -- either phone calls, text messages or emails that request your personal information -- contact the customer service group of the organization they claim to represent to verify the validity.â€• Look up the telephone number in the phone book, he added, again warning not to call the number given unless you have confirmed that is an accurate number.

Explaining that law enforcement is fully aware of the situation and an investigation is ongoing, Sgt. Ritchie asks anyone who has received the scam text message to avoid calling 911 or Bend Police.

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