

FRAUD AND SCAMS

What to watch out for and tips on how to protect yourself!

Every year, thousands of Canadians fall victim to fraud. Older adults are often the target of scammers. The following lists common scams directed at older adults and how to avoid them.



Telemarketer or door-to-door salesperson

How it works: Some sales people use high-pressure sales tactics to intimidate older adults into buying things they do not need.

How to avoid it: If they are selling door-to-door, ask to see their license, close the door, or call the police if you feel threatened. If it is a telemarketer, hang up the phone.



Bereavement

How it works: Scammers look through obituaries and contact victims who recently lost a loved one, claiming the deceased had unpaid bills or debts that must be paid.

How to avoid it: Arrange for a trusted family member or friend to handle all financial matters in the days following the loss of a loved one.

Grandparent

How it works: Scammers pretend to be the grandchild and contact older adults claiming to be in trouble and in need of money.

How to avoid it: Check with family to make sure your grandchildren are safe. Never send money to someone until you have confirmed their identity.

Funeral

How it works: Some funeral home owners are unscrupulous and may take advantage of people in their time of grief and overcharge for caskets, services or unnecessary items while the victim is vulnerable.

How to avoid it: Do your research and bring a friend or family member with you to plan your funeral in advance. Consider buying a membership with your local memorial society who can negotiate for lower funeral services when there is a death in the family.

Fly-by-night contractor

How it works: Someone approaches the homeowner saying they noticed a feature needs repair. Since they are in the area they can provide a great deal if they get a deposit today. After taking the money, they never return.

How to avoid it: When hiring a contractor get three written estimates and check references. Check with Service Alberta for a pre-paid contractor's license if they want money before completing work. If the contractor cannot show you their license, pay only after work is complete.



Sweepstakes, lottery and prize schemes

How it works: If you get a message saying you've won a contest, lottery or sweepstakes and are then asked to pay fees or taxes in advance in order to claim your prize, hang up the phone.

How to avoid it: DO NOT under any circumstances send money or personal/financial information to someone making such a request. The Better Business Bureau warns consumers to be on guard against these serious frauds and their perpetrators.



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