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Caution! New Phone Scam on the Rise

The FBI and U.S. Courts are warning consumers to be alert for an increasingly common, and effective telephone based identity theft threat known as "the jury duty scam."

In the jury duty scam, the scammer, posing as a local court worker, tells you that a warrant has been issued for your arrest because you failed to report for jury duty. Since you probably had not received a jury duty notice, you will say so. At this point, the scammer will ask for your date of birth and Social Security number so that he or she can "verify" your jury duty notice. Of course, a Social Security number and date of birth are all the identity thief needs to make your life downright miserable. But wait, there's more. Depending on your willingness to give up your basic information, the emboldened scammer may go on to ask you for credit card information.

Real U.S. court officials want you to know that the courts never ask for any personal information over the telephone. In reality, courts typically follow up with prospective and no-show jurors by conventional mail, rarely, if ever, by telephone.

Cases of the jury duty scam have been reported since 2005 in Michigan, Ohio, Texas, Arizona, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Oregon and Washington State. The scam has most recently been reported in California. Warnings about the jury duty scam have been posted on both the FBI and U.S. Courts website.

Protecting yourself against telephone-based identity theft is really simple; unless you have initiated the call, never give out your personal information over the telephone.