



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

Consumer Information

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Putting cash in the mail

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We've been warning you about scammers asking you to pay with gift cards (<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/paying-scammers-gift-cards>) or by wiring money (<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2015/08/avoiding-money-wiring-scams>). Scammers love getting you to pay that way because they can get your money fast and disappear. It's almost as good as getting you to send cold, hard cash. Which must have occurred to them, too, because some scammers are now going low-tech and asking people to send cash in the mail. Sometimes they even tell people to divide the cash between pages of a magazine.

According to the FTC's new Data Spotlight (<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/blogs/data-spotlight/2018/12/new-twist-grandparent-scam-mail-cash>), people 70 and older are reporting losing cash to scammers who pretend to be a friend or family member in trouble. (You know the calls: "Grandma, I'm in jail. I need you to send me money for bail." Or some variation on that theme). Here's what the FTC is seeing from reports of friend and family scams:

- People report losing \$41 million in the last twelve months, versus \$26 million the prior year.
- One quarter of people 70 and older report paying scammers in cash.
- People 70 and older who paid in cash report a median loss of \$9,000. Compare that to all age groups, who report losing a median of \$2,000 so far this year on these types of scams.

So what if you get one of these calls? No matter how alarming it seems, stop and check it out. Get off the phone and call the family member who's supposed to be in trouble – using a number you know is right. Can't reach them? Check with another friend or family member. And never, ever send cash by mail. (Or pay with a gift card. Or wire money to someone who demands it.)

And then tell the FTC (<http://www.ftc.gov/complaint>).