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## 'Grandson scam' costly for Rochester Hills senior

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An 89-year-old woman living in a Rochester Hills assisted-living facility was duped out of \$3,200 in what Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard is calling the "grandson scam."

Two residents of the All Seasons residence reported receiving telephone calls from male callers claiming to be a grandson in need of money for vehicle repairs in Canada. The woman who was defrauded said the caller asked her to guess which grandson was on the line. As soon as she named one of her grandsons, he claimed to be that very one. He then said his car had broken down in Canada and he needed \$3,200 for repairs.

The victim said he coaxed her into finding a ride to the bank and then to another location where she could send a MoneyGram to Canada. When she returned home, the man called again and received the reference number from her so he could retrieve the money. He also convinced the woman not to tell anyone about the incident.

It wasn't until later in the day that the woman became suspicious, obtained her real grandson's cell-phone number and learned she had been deceived. When the phony grandson called back for another \$4,200 the next day, the woman told him the police were involved and he hung up. The phone calls were traced to Canada, but they were from a pre-paid calling card and the exact location is untraceable.

A second woman in the same facility, reported receiving a similar phone call on the same day. In that case, a man asked her to send cash to an address in London, Ontario. When she informed him she couldn't get to the bank right away, he said he would call her back. He never did, and the woman later learned of the scam from a flier posted in the building.

Bouchard said the caller was able to get the first woman to go along because her grandson's identity had apparently been compromised.

The Web site [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com) said the "grandson scam" works because the caller has enough information about a person, likely because of identity theft, to be able to impersonate him over the phone. The caller may say he's been arrested for drunken driving or is in some other distress and is stranded far from home. The elderly are the preferred targets. Snopes says recipients of such calls should contact family members to verify the information or, failing that, ask the caller for information only the real relative would know.

"Unfortunately, there are unscrupulous individuals out there who will prey upon, lie to, and steal from our most vulnerable population, our seniors," Bouchard said. "To pose as a family member to a little old lady in hopes of scoring some cash is downright despicable. I don't want any other seniors to fall victim to this type of deceptive behavior. As always, trust your instincts, talk to your trusted family members when situations like this occur, and report suspicious behavior like this to your local authorities."

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