

State warns of scammers spoofing government agencies



Human rights activist Ahmed Mansoor shows Associated Press journalists a screenshot of a spoof text message he received in Ajman, United Arab Emirates, on Thursday, Aug. 25, 2016. Mansoor was recently targeted by spyware that can hack into Apple's iPhone handset. The company said Thursday it was updated its security. The text message reads: "New secrets on the torture of Emirati citizens in jail." (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell) ORG XMIT: WPJG104

ALBANY — State officials are warning New Yorkers about suspected criminals calling random people and pretending to be from government agencies.

The scam involves spoofing the callers' phone numbers to make it appear it's coming from a state agency and then seeking information that could be used to steal someone's identity.

"Government agencies do not typically call people with little or no warning asking for sensitive information or trying to get a payment over the phone," said state Secretary of State Rossana Rosado in a statement. "If it seems suspicious, it probably is. Look for the warning signs and verify the caller before engaging."

The fraud involves "spoofing," where a caller falsifies the information transmitted to caller ID displays. That illegal practice is becoming increasingly common, with people often receiving what appears to be a local call, even though it could have originated from anywhere.

New Yorkers are advised that if they receive a call from someone claiming to represent a government agency, they should hang up and call the agency back using contact information from an official website. Additionally, requests for payment from a government official will usually come in a written form first.

If a call is unexpected or suspicious, the state advises against revealing personal information, such as Social Security numbers.

In order to block automated calls, New Yorkers are encouraged to utilize services provided by their telephone company and different mobile applications.

State assistance with phone scams can be obtained by calling 1-800-697-1220 during normal business hours or visiting www.dos.ny.gov/consumerprotection.