

GIFT card scam



Consumers are being called, emailed and texted to purchase gift cards. The contact is initiated by someone posing as an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Agent, technical support, family member or even as an employee's boss.

The scammers are very good at convincing people there is an emergency; therefore, many consumers go to the store, purchase the gift cards and then let the scammer know when they have them in their possession. Recently, real estate agents have been targeted with this scam.

Here is an actual text Carl Carter Jr., a real estate agent in Arkansas, received:

Sender: Good Morning Carl are you working today?
Daniel, Your Broker

Real Estate Agent: Hi Daniel – yes sir!

Sender: Okay perfect, am with a client for a meeting and his kids want "Steam" gift cards. Can you help get four at \$100 each from any store? I'll reimburse you later today please and thanks.

Sender: Is this convenient for you?

Real Estate Agent: I can make it work. Can you give me a call to work through the details?

Sender: It's a gaming gift card called Steam. Most stores have them. When can you get them?

Sender: Let me know when you get them. I need the gift card numbers and the PIN for each.

There are other scenarios where the scammer poses as an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Agent, leaving a threatening message for the victim about buying gift cards to avoid tax evasion. Even scarier, they are able to spoof phone numbers and send text messages from someone who appears to be a family member or boss requesting gift cards.

The reason scammers love gift cards is — it is one of their favorite ways to steal money. The scammers do not even get the actual card — they request the numbers from the back of the cards.

Then they monetize the card in several dastardly ways — by purchasing apps they have developed themselves, reselling the cards on the internet at a discount, or activating the card and using it to purchase merchandise to resell.

These cards are like giving cash and are nearly untraceable — unless the victim acts immediately to have the card issuing company disable the cards. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has posted consumer alerts regarding the scam. They request consumers that have fallen victim contact the card issuing company first.

Even if the victims are not able to recover the funds, the card company needs to know the scam was perpetrated. Then, they request consumers report the incident to the FTC to aid in shutting the scam down.

The best way to prevent the scam from being successfully perpetrated is to be aware it is prevalent and could happen to anyone. Be sure to share this story with your friends, relatives and customers.