# Elderly victim almost loses thousands to scammers

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The scams just keep a comin', but thankfully one elderly Caddo Parish woman was able to get her money back before it was mailed off to a crook on Wednesday, said Caddo Sheriff Steve Prator.

The 80-year-old Shreveport woman was contacted on the phone by someone who claimed to be with the IRS. The caller said he had an arrest warrant for the woman for unpaid taxes, and if she didn't pay up, it would affect her future Social Security payments.

The woman went to her bank as instructed and immediately obtained five cashier's checks, each in the amount of $7,500. She then took the checks to Federal Express for delivery to Tampa, Florida. Afterward, she contacted her daughter, who lives out of state, and told her what occurred. Her daughter contacted Caddo Sheriff's Sgt. Casey Jones at the Caddo-Shreveport Financial Crimes Task Force, who advised that the victim should quickly try to get the checks back before they could go out for delivery. Luckily, the victim was able to retrieve the checks from Federal Express before losing $37,500 to the con artists.

"Not everyone is that lucky," said Sheriff Prator. "People lose their life savings falling for these scams. Just today, our office has received nearly 50 calls by people who have been contacted by these thieves."

According to the IRS website, citizens should be wary if they get an out-of-the-blue phone call or automated message from someone who claims to be from the IRS. "Sometimes they say you owe money and must pay right away. Other times they say you are owed a refund and ask for your bank account information over the phone. Don't fall for it," the IRS warns.

According to its website, the real IRS will NOT:

- Call you to demand immediate payment. The IRS will not call you if you owe taxes without first sending you a bill in the mail.
- Demand tax payment and not allow you to question or appeal the amount you owe.
- Require that you pay your taxes a certain way. For example, demand that you pay with a prepaid debit card.
- Ask for your credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Threaten to bring in local police or other agencies to arrest you without paying.
- Threaten you with a lawsuit.

Sheriff Prator said scams take many different forms. "Don't let the crooks scare you into action," he said. "Hang up, and contact law enforcement if needed."