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San Francisco Police Department Releases Video to Raise Awareness About Blessing Scams 25-016

January 30, 2025 | 9:43 PM

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Video was produced in partnership with a blessing scam target and Self Help for the Elderly

The San Francisco Police Department has produced a [new video](#) to help raise awareness about blessing scams and to give community members – particularly members of the Chinese community – important information about how to avoid being targeted by criminals seeking to steal their money and property.

The video, which was released Thursday, was produced with input from the SFPD’s Community Engagement Division, Self Help for the Elderly, The San Francisco District Attorney’s Office, the Community Youth Center of San Francisco, and other city and community groups.

Self Help for the Elderly provides culturally competent services to the senior Chinese population in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The video features three volunteer actresses: Siu Lee Shui C as the Blessing Scam target, and Rong Rui Juan and Mok Lei Yu acting as scammers. Ms. Siu Lee Chui C is well aware of these scams from previous collaborative education and prevention efforts. Earlier in January, she experienced an encounter with two scammers in the outer Sunset area and was able to flee from the scammers safely.

She later informed her friends about the encounter to remind others to stay vigilant through social media platforms and at her place of worship. She also discussed this experience with her family members who decided to contact the police department. As someone who frequents one of Self Help for the Elderly’s senior centers, she also informed the center’s staff and neighbors there at a later time.

Ms. Siu Lee Chui C decided to collaborate with SFPD when she learned of the department’s mission to produce a video to help educate members of the public on ways to refuse to engage with scammers and strangers.

“I applaud Ms. Lee for her bravery to work with the San Francisco Police Department on reporting the incident and telling her story to our Chinese community through this video,” said SFPD Chief Bill Scott. “This is a result of our Community Engagement Division officers, Special Victims Unit, Sheriff’s Office, and District Attorney’s Office’s efforts and commitment to outreaching to our community and organizations like Self Help for the Elderly. As we are investigating these crimes, we want to continue to remind community members to stay

vigilant to prevent blessing scams by continuing to talk to one another often and working with SFPD to report these crimes.”

“Self Help for the Elderly often reports back that seniors have a hard time rejecting strangers even when if they think it is necessary,” said Anni Chung, CEO and President of Self Help for the Elderly. “That is why it is important to shift the video’s focus on telling them how to say no. Our staff members along with a senior who came so close to being in contact with scammers were eager to participate in producing this video with the San Francisco Police Department to tell the important story.”

About The Blessing Scam

Blessing scams often involve Cantonese-speaking suspects who approach a victim about visiting a doctor. An additional suspect often approaches the group and acts as a fortune teller, stating the victim and a loved one will be cursed or suffer some form of misfortune. To relieve the curse, the victim must present the fortune teller with valuables to be “blessed.”

The suspects then convince the victim to bring valuables, consisting of currency and jewelry in a bag to another area. After the so-called “blessing” is performed, the suspects give the victim another bag containing worthless items. The victim is instructed not to look in the bag for a specified amount of time or the “blessing” would be invalidated.

It’s often days or weeks later before the victim knows they’ve been victimized.

Ways To Report Blessing Scam Incidents, Other Resources, and Language Access

SFPD is committed to safety with respect for all our City's communities. The department works closely with San Francisco's multilingual communities to identify and address specific safety concerns. SFPD currently has hundreds of officers that speak more than 30 different languages. The department is encouraging all bilingual officers to become certified to provide Limited English Proficiency (LEP) services to community members.

Anyone who is confronted by scammers or anyone who knows of an elder who was approached by scammers is strongly advised to contact the police. When calling or working with SFPD, residents may use simple English to state to their preferred language of service, such as “Cantonese,” “Mandarin” or “Toisanese.”

- Call 9-1-1 for crimes in progress
- Reports can be made at any SFPD District Station
- Call Dispatch at (415) 553-0123 and request an officer to take a report.
- Cantonese speakers can leave tips on a special tip line by calling (415) 553-9212 or 1-855-737-3847
- Information can also be called into the Anonymous Tip Line at (415) 575-4444 or via Text a Tip by texting a message to TIP411 and beginning the message with SFPD.
- To request an SFDA presentation please contact the Victim Services Division via email at: victimservices@sfgov.org or via phone at (628) 652-4100.

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