



Neighbourhood Watch

Wednesday 14th October 2009.

Warning as fake police steal £34,000 from elderly *By Bill Stock*

Elderly people throughout Essex have been urged to be on their guard against fraudsters posing as police officers who have stolen more than £34,000 in a month by tricking their victims into revealing their bank details.

The fake policemen have targeted 69 people since the start of September, including more than 20 in the past two days, and were successful at least five times. **In the worst case, in Chelmsford on Monday, October 12, £28,000 was taken from the bank account of a woman in her eighties.**

The tricksters are posing as Metropolitan Police fraud officers and tell their victims that their bank accounts have been entered by fraudsters. A potential victim is then asked to give a PIN number over the telephone and leave the bank cards in an envelope outside the front door or halfway through the letterbox so that they can be collected later. The cards are then picked up and with the PIN number they are used to withdraw large sums of cash.

In some cases victims are phoned regularly, sometimes hourly, throughout the day as the fake officers try to convince people to follow their instructions. Some people who have refused to carry out the instructions have been subjected to abuse and even threats of violence. Chris Willis, a Territorial Policing inspector, based at Essex Police Headquarters, said: "We all need to work together to combat these despicable people who are preying on the more vulnerable and also genuine and trusting members of our communities.

"A legitimate person would never, under any circumstances, ask you to disclose your PIN number for a bank card over the phone and anyone receiving such a request should terminate the call and consider calling the police. In addition, no-one would ever legitimately ask you to hand over your bank cards.

"We can all play a part in stopping these appalling offences and Essex Police encourages listeners/readers to speak to neighbours, friends or relatives, making sure they understand the good advice given above. The more people who are aware of this type of crimes, the less chance there will be that these wicked people will be successful."

Anyone who is contacted by the tricksters should contact their local police station immediately on 0300 333 4444.

