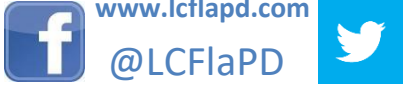


# Press Release

**LAKE CITY**  
**POLICE**  
**DEPARTMENT**



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*Chief of Police Gerald Butler*

**For Immediate Release**  
Wednesday, December 13, 2023

**Ashley Hardison, Public Information Officer**  
Ph. 386.752.4343

## Scammer Impersonating Chief

On Wednesday, December 13, 2023, officers of the Lake City Police Department responded to a citizen's call to report fraudulent activity.

The victim reported the Lake City Police Department called their phone a number of times. The call was from the department phone number: 386-752-4343. The caller told the victim their identity was used for fraudulent accounts in a different state. The caller advised the victim they were determined to not be a suspect. However, in order to continue the identity theft investigation, the victim needed to transfer the total amount of funds from their bank account to an Apple gift card and provide the gift card details to the caller. The victim followed the directions of the caller. When the caller instructed the victim to transfer funds from savings to checking the victim became concerned and visited the Lake City Police Department in person.

During one of the several calls, a second person spoke with the victim stating they were Chief Butler and they were verifying the investigation.

"Technology has advantages and disadvantages," said Gerald Butler Chief of Police. "A significant disadvantage of technology is the ability for criminals to use it to commit fraudulent activity and scam citizens. There are technologies which enable criminals to mask or spoof phone numbers. This allows the criminal to appear as if they are calling from a number such as the Lake City Police Department."

Tips to avoid being a victim of scams or fraud:

- A government agency will never request payment in the form of gift cards.
- The IRS or other federal entities will not call or e-mail citizens.
- If a person receives a call from any entity alleging to be a government agency or a business, get the caller's name and phone number and end the call. Verify the organization's phone number online. If the number is correct, call back and request to speak to the original caller. If the call was fraudulent or masked, it is unlikely the caller will be available or unaware of the situation.
- Do not click on links in e-mails or text messages. Go to the original website or app to verify messages or track packages.



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