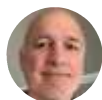


LOCAL

Churchville man loses \$14,000 in cryptocurrency scam



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CHURCHVILLE — The Augusta County Sheriff's Office reported a Churchville man is out \$14,800 after being caught up in a cryptocurrency scam last week when contacted by an unsolicited phone caller.

The 45-year-old victim told the sheriff's office that he received a phone call on May 26 from a man claiming to be a federal police officer with the Social Security Administration.

According to Lt. Leslie Snyder, a spokesperson for the Augusta County Sheriff's Office, the victim was told he was under investigation for possibly having drug proceeds deposited into his bank account. Snyder said the victim was told he had 24 hours to move the cash to another account before it was frozen "and it would be months before he could get to it."

The victim also noted the caller knew the exact balance of his bank account, Snyder said.

The victim was instructed to go to Lockhart's Market on Spring Hill Road in Staunton, where Snyder said the man was told to deposit his money into a Bitcoin account. The store has a Bitcoin ATM.

"He made two transactions" totaling \$14,800, Snyder said.

The caller continued to contact the victim several times that same day, according to Snyder, until the Churchville man finally realized he was being scammed and reached out to the sheriff's office to file a report.

The suspect remains at-large.

Earlier this year, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reported consumers lost nearly \$8.8 billion to fraud in 2022, a 30% increase over the previous year. The FTC received fraud reports from 2.4 million consumers last year.

Since the beginning of 2021, nearly 50,000 people have lost over \$1 billion in crypto scams, almost 60 times more than in 2018, according to the FTC.

800 year old infant taken from a Verona burial mound may finally come home. With one inexplicable — and perhaps illegal — change.

Armed robbery reported at Waynesboro store

Brad Zinn is the cops, courts and breaking news reporter at The News Leader. Have a news tip? Or something that needs investigating? You can email reporter Brad Zinn (he/him) at bzinn@newsleader.com. You can also follow him on Twitter.