Individuals unfortunately look for opportunities to take advantage of people through scam and fraudulent activity. Even now with the COVID-19 Epidemic individuals will try to take advantage of the situation.

**General guidelines:**

- Don’t be pressured by a threatening caller. Stop, think and check whether their story is true.

- A government agency or trusted company will never ask you to pay by unusual methods such as by gift or store cards, iTunes vouchers, wire transfers or Bitcoins.

- If you receive a phone call from someone threatening you and asking you to pay a fee, hang up and do not respond.

- Don’t use any contact details provided by the caller. Verify their identity by calling the relevant organization directly.

- Do not respond to texts or emails. If you do, the scammers will escalate their intimidation and attempts to get your money.

- Never send money or give credit card details, online account details or personal information to anyone you don’t know or trust and never by email or over the phone.

- Never give out your license number, banking information, credit card information or your Social Security Number to anyone you do not know or trust.

- Don’t answer Robocalls.

- Don’t open apps or websites you do not trust.
Warning signs:

- You receive a call out of the blue from someone claiming to be from a government department, debt collection agency or trusted company.
- You may be left a message on your answering machine asking you to ring a number.
- The caller will claim that you have issues with your immigration forms or visa status.
- The caller will tell you that in order to resolve the matter you will need to pay a fee or fine.
- The caller may ask for your personal information such as your passport details, date of birth or bank information.
- The caller may claim the police will come to your door and arrest you if you do not pay the fee or fine immediately.

Other fraud and scams to be aware of, including COVID-19 Epidemic scams:

- Robocalls making fraudulent offers to sell you something (example: respirator masks) with no intent of delivery.
- Fake apps and websites that install malware or ransomware.
- Phishing emails asking for money or presenting malware.
- Social media scams fraudulently seeking donations or claiming to provide stimulus funds if the recipient enters his or her bank account number.
- Sales of fake testing kits, cures, “immunity” pills, and protective equipment.
- Fraudulent offers for free COVID-19 testing in order to obtain Medicare beneficiary information that is used to submit false medical claims for unrelated, unnecessary, or fictitious testing or services.
- Prescription drug schemes involving the submission of medical claims.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Stowe Police Department at (802) 253-7126.