



Oct. 28, 2025 Media Release

'Celebrity' Catfish Scam Leads to Local Resident Losing Over \$25,000

Nevada City, CA – The Nevada County Sheriff's Office (NCSO) would like to remind residents to stay on heightened alert when contacted via phone, email, or social media from any unfamiliar person or entity. Scammers are always looking for opportunities to prey on unsuspecting individuals.

Most recently, a Nevada County resident fell victim to a “celebrity” catfish scam, resulting in the loss of more than \$25,000. The scam began when the victim commented on a Facebook post and someone posing as a celebrity asked the victim to private message him.

Through chatting on Facebook, the scammer convinced the victim to move their conversation into a popular private messaging app called Zangi. The victim spoke with the scammer for several hours per day building trust via the app (never over the phone) and was eventually persuaded to join the fake actor's fan club for \$200. Once the membership was established, the victim was convinced to become a “VIP Fan Club” member at \$5,000 and the scamming escalated from there with the victim paying the scammer through several methods, including mobile wallet numbers, Bitcoin, and gift cards.

“We are sharing this unfortunate incident to build awareness in the hopes of preventing a similar incident from happening to someone else,” said Undersheriff Sam Brown. “Scammers often pose as others and use deception to build false trust. If you're contacted by anyone you don't personally know who asks you for money, chances are it's a scam and you should not engage with them.”

The following are scam prevention reminders:

1. **Verify identities.** Never assume someone is who they claim to be—especially online.
2. **Don't send money or gift cards.** No legitimate person or organization will ask for payment through gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency.
3. **Be cautious with personal information.** Avoid sharing personal details, photos, or financial information with anyone you haven't met in person and verified.
4. **Watch for urgency or secrecy.** Scammers often pressure their victims to act fast or keep things “private.”
5. **Check verified accounts.** Real celebrity accounts are usually marked with a verified badge. Even then, be cautious—fake accounts can look very convincing.
6. **Search before you believe.** Use a search engine to check for reports of similar scams or fake profiles using the same photos or names. In the case of the celebrity scam, research for the celebrity's verified account. Often celebrities will release their own PSAs on their accounts, warning fans of this very scam.
7. **Don't click suspicious links.** Links sent by unknown contacts can lead to phishing websites or malware.
8. **Trust your instincts.** If something feels off or too good to be true, it probably is.
9. **Report suspicious accounts.** Notify the social media platform or web host if you suspect an account is fictitious. Reporting scams can help others from becoming victims.

10. **Report possible scams.** If you believe you were the victim of a scam, please contact NCSO or your local law enforcement authority for assistance.
11. **Talk about it.** While it can be embarrassing for victims to share their experiences, open communication spreads awareness and helps reduce further harm.

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