

Timely Warning: Phone Scammers Impersonating UCRPD

Dear Campus Community,

This joint message is to inform the campus community about a recent incident and to provide important information regarding phone scams and other cyber crimes. UCRPD and the ITS Information Security Office are working together to ensure our community is aware of these malicious tactics and knows how to protect themselves.

On April 24, 2025, the UC Riverside Police Department (UCRPD) received a report that an unknown individual had spoofed the Police Department's non-emergency phone number (951-827-5222) in an attempt to extort money from a member of the campus community. The caller falsely claimed that if the victim did not pay the demanded amount, UCRPD officers would "deport" them.

To be unequivocally clear: **UCRPD does not enforce immigration law and does not participate in immigration enforcement efforts.** Furthermore, **UCRPD will never call to demand payment in lieu of arrest or any form of immigration action.** Any such message is a scam and should be reported immediately for documentation and investigation.

Unfortunately, it is relatively easy for these malicious actors to "spoof" phone numbers, meaning they can make it appear as if their call is coming from a legitimate source, even a university phone number. Please understand that there is currently no technical solution available to completely prevent this type of phone number manipulation. It is an increasingly common tactic that warrants vigilance from members of our Highlander community whether at work, school, or home.

These scams, whether they occur via phone calls (vishing), emails (phishing), or text messages (smishing), often leverage social engineering tactics. Malicious actors often exploit current events and time-sensitive issues to create a sense of urgency, fear, or helplessness in their targets. By leveraging these emotional triggers, they hope to bypass your critical thinking and pressure you into taking immediate action without verifying the caller's legitimacy.

To help you protect yourself from falling victim to these scams, please keep the following tips in mind:

Recognize and Avoid Phishing and Phone Scams

- **Never provide sensitive information over the phone unless you initiated the call and are certain of the recipient's identity.** This includes your social security number, student visa details, bank account details, credit card numbers, passwords, etc..

- **Be wary of unsolicited calls demanding immediate payment or threatening negative consequences if you don't comply.** Legitimate organizations, including UCRPD and the university, will not pressure you for immediate payment over the phone.
- **Question any call that evokes a strong emotional response, such as fear or urgency.** Scammers often use these tactics to prevent you from thinking clearly. Take a moment to pause and consider the situation.
- **Independently verify the caller's identity.** If you receive a suspicious call claiming to be from UCRPD or any other university department, hang up and call the official number directly. You can find official UCR contact information on the university's website (profiles.ucr.edu). **Do not rely on a callback number provided by the caller.**
- **UCRPD does not accept payments over the phone and will never request money via phone, text, or email.** If you need to make a payment for specific UCRPD services, you will be directed to the "Services" tab on the official UCRPD website.
- **UCRPD has no role in immigration enforcement** and does not coordinate any such activity with federal immigration agencies.
- **UCRPD personnel**, including officers, Campus Safety Responders, dispatchers, and student workers, **all have unique identification numbers.**
 - If you receive a suspicious call from someone claiming to be from UCRPD, **hang up and call UCRPD directly** at 951-827-5222 (do not allow yourself to be transferred).
 - Ask for the identification number of the person attempting to contact you. If you are contacted again by the original caller, ask them to recite their identification number to verify their identity.

UCRPD detectives are actively investigating the recent phone spoofing incident. If you have received a similar message, please contact UCRPD directly at (951) 827-5222 or via email at UCRPDgeneralmail@ucr.edu. If you have been contacted via email, please report the suspicious email to abuse@ucr.edu. Your reports are valuable and help UCRPD and the ITS Information Security Office understand the scope of these malicious activities.

Your safety and security are our top priorities. For more guidance on how to identify and avoid scams, visit <https://its.ucr.edu/iso-alert>. Please remain vigilant and share this information with others in our campus community.

Sincerely,

Jeff Talbott
Chief of Police
UCR Police & Campus Safety Services

Dewight Kramer
Chief Information Security Officer
Information Technology Solutions