

## CONSUMER

# Seniors: Tips to Recognize, Avoid Telemarketing Scams

NewsUSA

(NU) - It's shrewd, not rude, to hang up on a bad telemarketer. That's what the National Crime Prevention Council recommends to senior citizens, who are prime targets for con artists.

Telemarketing fraud is defined as using the telephone in a scheme to cheat people out of their assets — their earnings, savings, pensions or valuables — by deceptive and illegal means. Studies show that fraudulent telemarketers direct anywhere from 56 percent to 80 percent of their calls at older Americans.

With nearly 10 percent of seniors 65 and older and more than 50 percent older than 80 suffering from some form of memory loss, dementia or Alzheimer's disease, seniors and their caregivers need to be leery of strange or unexpected callers, warns the NCPC.

The organization has some tips to help seniors and their caregivers avoid being victims of telemarketing fraud:

- Sign up for the Do Not Call Registry at 888-382-1222 or [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov). That will help decrease calls from telemarketers.

- If a caller asks for personal information such as a credit card number or Social Security number, say: "I don't give out personal information over the phone. I'll contact the company directly and provide them with the necessary information." Then hang up.



**The National Crime Prevention Council provides this free brochure, featuring McGruff the Crime Dog, to help seniors steer clear of telemarketing fraud.**

- If a caller offers a free item and then wants you to pay for shipping and handling or taxes, say: "I shouldn't have to send money for something that's free." Then hang up.

- If a caller wants a decision on a limited-time offer right away, say: "I'd like some time to think about this. Tell me how I can get in touch with you. If I'm interested, I'll call you back."

- If you don't understand all the details of the verbal offer, have the telemarketer send you the information by mail. If the caller won't do that, say: "If you can't mail me the information, then I can't talk to you."

A free brochure containing additional safety tips is available by calling 800-WE-PREVENT or online at [www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org).