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Scam targets HSBC patrons

Staff Reports The Tonawanda News

— — Erie County Comptroller Mark Poloncarz is asking residents to be aware of another telephone scam that targets county residents in an effort to obtain their personal information.

It's the second phone scam seeking bank account data over the phone within the past month. The first purported to be from the "Western New York Credit Union."

This time, though, identity thieves are contacting potential victims with a text message that reads, "HSBC ALERT," and asks them to call a phone number in order to resolve an alleged problem with an HSBC account.

The phone number leads to a professional recording, which asks for the victim's bank account information. It appears that random cell phone numbers are being used, though it is unknown exactly how widespread these text messages are.

The messages have even been sent to Poloncarz, whose job as county comptroller is to protect residents from fraud and wasteful spending. "Last night, I received two of these fraudulent text messages on my personal cell phone," Poloncarz said Tuesday.

"While they may seem legitimate, they are not. Please do not be fooled; this is a scam. Considering the text messages are being received by many county residents, regardless of whether they are a customer of HSBC Bank, it is important that all residents be aware of this scam and be vigilant to these scam artists," he added.

In late February, a similar fraud scheme targeted Erie County employees. That one was initiated by a phone call and automated message warning potential victims that their "Western New York Credit Union" debit card had been deactivated and requested they then enter their account information to "reactivate."

Poloncarz said he has been told by HSBC representatives that the bank does not send text messages to their customers. "As soon as you are asked for any sensitive personal information, that's when you should be suspicious," he said.

"Whether you are an HSBC customer or not, your bank or credit card company will never call or text you and ask for your account information."

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