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wasn't her grandson — it was a scammer cheating the woman out of money.

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A 75-year-old Aiken, South Carolina woman on recently wired her grandson \$1,300 for bond after he was arrested in Mexico for drug possession. The only problem is, it wasn't her grandson — it was a scammer cheating the woman out of money.

The woman filed a report with the Aiken Department of Public Safety. She told police she'd received a call from her grandson asking for the bond money, so she sent it to him via Western Union. The man claiming to be her grandson called back the next day and told her he needed another \$2,000 for court costs.

According to the incident report, the woman later found out her grandson had never been to Mexico. This operation is known as the “grandparent scam,” and is one of

seven scams that commonly target the elderly, according to a recent article in USA

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seen frequently in Aiken. As part of the scam, a caller tells the victim they've won a large prize, and in order for them to collect the prize, they must first pay a fee or taxes, usually a few hundred dollars.

Hembree said the first step to avoid falling victim to the lottery scam is to be aware of what lotteries and games you play, especially if the call comes from an organization outside the country.

"It's hard to win something if they haven't played it," he said. "If you haven't been overseas or at some point conducted business overseas, then you can't win something you don't play."

If you get a call from a family member claiming to be in jail in another country, Hembree said contact the family member or another relative and see if they are out of town.

In the "homeowner scam," the scammer may call the victim or knock on their door and solicit home repairs that the victim doesn't need. Aiken Public Safety received a report last July about an elderly dementia patient being scammed into paying \$1,700 for unnecessary work to her home.

The article goes on to list other scams, including "cash fraud" in which a scammer fraudulently asks for money for charities or takes advantage of a senior's loneliness with "romance or sweetheart scams." The "medical scam" involves getting a call about a sale on some type of medical equipment, with the caller asking for a deposit and the victim's personal information to send the equipment. The equipment, of course, is never sent.

The entire article can be viewed by visiting <http://tinyurl.com/kpbgqrf>.

Hembree said if you get a call from a suspicious person or organization, ask questions

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and financial activity to prevent them from falling victim to a scam.

“If you see them withdrawing a large amount of money for no apparent reason, inquire: What did you get the money for?” Hembree said. “Be observant and involved in the parts to the decision-making process of the people you care for.”

It's next to impossible to retrieve money lost in a scam, and local police are often limited in investigating scams from overseas due to international jurisdictional issues; however, if you suspect you or a loved one are being contacted by a scammer, call your local law enforcement agency.

“We'd like to know about it,” Hembree said. “We encourage them to report it to us. We may not be able to investigate it, but it lets us know what scams are going on so we can inform the public.”

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