

Attorney general raised awareness of scams

[By Jessie Higgins, The World](#) The World | Posted: Wednesday, October 19, 2011 11:00 am |

NORTH BEND -- During his term as state attorney general, John Kroger tried to advance citizens' awareness of scams.

His office operates a scam alert email, which goes out to whoever has signed up, that warns of new or ingenious scams targeting Oregonians. Still, last year Oregonians lost over \$1 million in overseas transfer schemes.

'Some of the scams are old, but they still work,' Kroger said at a recent Oregon Bay Area Chamber of Commerce luncheon at The Mill Casino-Hotel, the last time he was in Coos County.

As an example, he pointed to the grandparent scam, to which a Reedsport woman fell victim in late September, wherein she lost about \$1,000, Reedsport police said.

A young, usually male, voice wakes an elderly person in the middle of the night with a phone call, pretending to be in Mexico. In older versions of the scam, the voice pretends to be the person's grandchild who is in serious trouble. The Mexican police have locked up the grandchild and are demanding bribe money.

More recently, the scam has become more sophisticated, and the caller poses as a bail bondsman, or a corrupt jailer, demanding money for the grandchild's release.

In the past, scammers have been known to target any elderly person, not knowing whether they have grandchildren or where those grandchildren are.

Using such social-networking websites as Facebook, scammers now can find college kids who have grandparents listed on their pages, and call during times, like spring break, when it is more likely the young person would find themselves in trouble.

'People are not thinking right in the middle of the night,' Kroger said. 'They give out their credit card number and, boom, they're ripped off.'

Despite modern computer forensics, which had enabled the attorney general's office to locate many computer scammers, it is virtually impossible to catch scammers who are overseas, Kroger said.

'There is no enforcement model that works,' he said.

The solution is to be on guard, learn about the latest scams and distrust late-night callers.

If you know about a local scam, call reporter Jessie Higgins at 541-269-1222, ext. 240, or jhiggins@theworldlink.com.