

Watch out for Valentine's Day romance scams

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Valentine's Day is fast approaching, but with it comes the danger of scammers looking to steal from people on dating apps.

Seasoned online criminals often create false profiles on dating sites and apps and also try to make contact via Facebook or other popular social media sites, according to the FBI.

To avoid becoming a victim, the FBI recommends you use only reputable, recognizable dating websites, though be aware scammers may be using these sites, too. Never provide your financial information, loan money, or allow your bank accounts to be used to transfer funds.

Further, the FBI warns not to allow yourself to be isolated from your family and friends, and do not believe stories of tragic life circumstances, family deaths, injuries, or other hardships aimed at tugging at your heartstrings.

If you are planning an in person get-together with someone you have talked to online, meet in a public place and let a trusted friend or relative know where you will be and what time you expect to return home.

If you are traveling to a foreign country to meet, check the State Department's Travel Advisories beforehand, at travel.state.gov, provide your itinerary to family and friends and, if possible, do not travel alone.

According to an FBI statement, people are sometimes hesitant to report being a victim of this type of scam. But the FBI says this type of scam is not unusual.

If you suspect that your online relationship is a scam, immediately stop all contact. If you have already sent money, immediately report it to your financial institution, file a complaint with the Internet Crimes Complaint Center (www.ic3.gov) and contact law enforcement.