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Press Release

Business Extortion Scheme

FBI announces a nationwide attempt to extort ethnic business owners

Winthrop Harbor, IL – June 16, 2009. The Winthrop Harbor Police Department Cyber Crimes Unit (CCU) has received information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that details an extortion scheme that is being used against business owners.

“The FBI is currently aware of a nationwide attempt to extort ethnic business owners, mostly of Asian descent, through telephonic threats of violence. The telephone calls appear to be originating from foreign countries. The caller acquires an adequate amount of open source information about the victim through Internet searches. This misleads the victim into believing the subject has personal knowledge about the victim. There have been no reported incidents of violence actually perpetrated to date.”

Individuals who receive phone calls or e-mails containing threats of violence and their personally identifiable information are encouraged to contact law enforcement as well as file a complaint at Internet Crime Complaint Center (www.IC3.gov).

The CCU recommends safe guarding yourself by not posting personal information on publicly available web sites, and ensuring that profiles on social networking sites such as Face Book, MySpace and others are set to private. The CCU also recommends that you periodically view what information is available about you on the internet by using a common internet search engine (www.google.com; www.bing.com) and searching for your name, business name, and family members.

The Winthrop Harbor Police Department’s Cyber Crimes Unit focuses on a wide array of criminal activity, including Internet and computer fraud, predators who are trying to harm Winthrop Harbor’s children, cyber bullying, cyber stalking and other forms of computer, Internet, and electronic crimes. The unit works closely with federal, state and other local law enforcement, and industry members to develop, coordinate, and implement effective strategies to combat high tech crimes. The unit is a member of the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, and also provides educational materials to community members in an effort to educate and safeguard village residents against Cyber Crimes.

For additional information, please contact the CCU at (847) 872-2131 ext. 338, or ccu@whpd.org.

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