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# BOSTON REGIONAL INTELLIGENCE CENTER



## Situational Awareness

### *Phone Scams Targeting Area Colleges / Students*

**Overview:** The BRIC is aware of reports from area colleges involving different phone scams in which official government phone numbers are “spoofed.” According to the Federal Communications Commission, spoofing occurs when a caller deliberately falsifies the information transmitted to your caller ID to disguise their identity. Phone scams are typically intended to collect personally identifiable information or to procure some sort of financial payment. In many phone scam reports, the caller knows some basic information about the victim which may lead the victim to believe the phone call is valid; however, an abundance of personal information to include relatives, associates, work / school details, etc., may be collected from open source websites. See below for information on scams that have been recently reported to the BRIC.

- **Spoofed FBI Phone Number Scam:** According to open source reporting, multiple FBI Divisions have warned of phone scams in which the FBI’s phone number has been spoofed. Many of these scams reportedly targeted college students, with a caller claiming the victim was delinquent on taxes, parking tickets, or student loans. In other similar scams the caller informs the victim there is a federal warrant for their arrest which will be thrown out in exchange for payment. **The FBI does not call citizens to demand payment and does not send digital pictures of credentials or badges.** The BRIC is aware of at least one local report of this scam in which a local FBI office’s phone number was spoofed.
- **Spoofed Chinese Embassy Scam:** At least one area college received several voicemails from a phone number which comes back to the Chinese Embassy. The voicemails are in Mandarin and claim something is wrong with the recipient’s Visa and to contact them immediately. According to open sources, scams involving a spoofed Chinese Embassy or Consulate’s phone number have been reported throughout the country targeting the local Chinese community. These scams typically involve a request for personally identifiable information or bank account information. Victims of these scams have reported financial losses.

If you receive a suspicious phone call and believe it may be a scam:

- Do not provide any personally identifiable information or financial information to anyone soliciting this over the phone if you did not initiate contact or have no ties to the caller
- If you get a phone call from someone claiming to represent a government agency or company seeking personal information, hang up and contact the agency or company to verify the authenticity of the request
- File a report with your local police department

***This information is being shared for situational awareness purposes only.***

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## SOURCES

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