

Parking Lot Scam

It's called "a friend in need" scam and it takes a variety of forms. The parking lot one is one of them but so is...

I need to use your phone
I'm a long lost relative
We were in the neighborhood
I'm collecting for a charity

Be responsible in your giving.

Parking Lot Scam

On a Friday shopping trip to Costco, I was approached in the parking lot as I was about to put my groceries in the car. A woman in her thirties approached me and said that she and her children had just left an abusive relationship and wasn't able to get a cheque from Welfare until Monday. She was very embarrassed to ask, but could she please borrow \$10 until Monday in order to buy milk and bread for the weekend.

Being suspicious of scams, I responded that I had no cash and had purchased my groceries with my debit card. I then offered to give her some bread from my shopping cart. She declined and said she'd ask someone else.

Her response to my offer further aroused my suspicion, so I went back into the store and spoke to their security people. They were not surprised and went out to speak to this individual. Upon their return, I learned that this particular individual has been hanging around their parking lot, approaching shoppers on a regular basis for 2-3 years. She sometimes brings her daughter along with her, and always has a different hard luck story.

Most people don't question her situation and immediately respond with usually \$20. If this individual gets \$20 from just 5 people a day, she's taking in some \$2000 - \$3000/month - a pretty good living for begging!

People are afraid not to respond "in case her story is true." If it were true, there is "Emergency Social Services" available for evening and weekend situations, and this person could always ask the police for help.

Remember that people like this continue to exist because good hearted citizens continue to respond by opening their wallets.

The Costco security people advised me that they've also heard of this happening on a pretty regular basis in the Superstore parking lots.

Please remember folks, this is just another form of fraud.