



# Toolbox Series: Cybersecurity & Romance Scams

In 2019, people reported losing over \$200 million to romance scams. Romance scam losses have increased year over year. It is the costliest scam to-date.

Romance scammers use fake profiles on social media and/or online dating websites to meet that special someone. These scammers build a relationship with their victims to earn their trust. Then they share a heartbreaking story where they ask their victim for money. Some examples that have been reported are:

- Working on an oil rig
- In the military
- A doctor with an international organization
- Trying to get through customs/paying taxes/visa documents issues
- Has an ill family member who needs surgery or other medical emergency

Often, these scammers will profess love immediately. They will ask that you start communicating off the dating site or social media. The need for money will be urgent and will insist on receiving the money via wire or gift card.

Never send money or gifts to someone you haven't met in person. Money can be sent by wire transfer through your bank or Western Union, or with various reloadable cards or gift cards. It's almost impossible to recover money once you've sent it. Also, don't give out your bank account information.

Slow down – stop and think if this is legitimate.

Remove the emotions from your conversation.

Talk to your family, friend, or banker. Don't wait until it's too late.

Contact your bank if you think you've sent money using your bank account. Or contact the company that issued the card if you paid the scammer with a gift card to see if they can assist to refund your money.