



For Immediate Release
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MISLEADING ATM PERSONAL SAFETY INFORMATION

Misinformation Re: Alerting Police Through P.I.N. Reversal

Burnaby, January 4, 2007 – BC Crime Prevention Association (BCCPA) has received many enquiries about a misleading e-mail crime prevention suggestion intended to help ATM users alert police by keying in their PIN in reverse.

BCCPA wishes to advise the public that the procedure described in the e-mail does not work and may give bank customers a false sense of security, should they become a victim of a robbery during which they are forced to surrender cash withdrawn from an ATM machine.

A sample of the e-mail now circulating reads:

"Subject: PIN NUMBER REVERSAL

PIN NUMBER REVERSAL (GOOD TO KNOW)

If you should ever be forced by a robber to withdraw money from an ATM machine, you can notify the police by entering your Pin # in reverse. For example if your pin number is 1234 then you would put in 4321. The ATM recognizes that your pin number is backwards from the ATM card you placed in the machine. The machine will still give you the money you requested, but unknown to the robber, the police will be immediately dispatched to help you. This information was recently broadcasted on TV and it states that it is seldom used because people don't know it exists. Please pass this along to everyone possible."

BCCPA advises that bank customers should be aware of their surroundings when entering an ATM lobby already occupied by a stranger especially outside normal bank hours and late at night. However, should a customer be confronted in a robbery no resistance should be offered and the cash should be surrendered. As soon as it is safe to do so the victim should call 9-1-1 to report the incident.

Jeff Burton, Crime Shield Co-coordinator for BCCPA, advises "this recommendation, though well-intentioned, does not work and there is no panic code or button to assist customers needing to summon police assistance". He adds that there is a useful history and analysis of the PIN reversal idea at <http://www.snopes.com/business/bank/pinalert.asp>

According to BCCPA Executive Director, Valerie MacLean, "After receiving a number of enquiries about whether PIN reversal could be used to summons help, we feel we had a duty to clarify the situation as we do not want ATM users to feel this technique can alert police. Being aware of your surroundings and others around you when you enter an ATM lobby at a bank or when using a stand-alone ATM machine is the best measure to preventing yourself from becoming a victim of robbery. If you do not feel comfortable with an individual(s) who may be present around the ATM machine, leave the ATM area and wait for that person to leave before you come back to initiate your transaction or go to another ATM location."

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