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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-Email Scam

Date: September 21, 2011

Contact: District Attorney Paul Gallegos

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RE: Email Scam

Over the past several months, several local attorneys have had their email servers “hacked”, or accessed, by unknown persons. After accessing the email account, the hacker posed as the attorney and sent emails to local residents requesting money.

The most current incident of email “hacking” involved the Arnot Law Firm of Eureka. Emails were sent from Mr. Arnot’s account to several current and former clients asking for money to be wired to Spain, stating that Mr. Arnot had misplaced his wallet while on vacation. The emails were signed “Phil” with the Arnot Law Firm footer at the bottom of the email. One recipient of the email recognized it as being suspicious and contacted the Humboldt County District Attorney’s Office (HCDA).

HCDA investigators contacted Mr. Arnot and confirmed that his email server had been hacked and that the email recipients were targets of an Internet based scam designed to fraudulently acquire money under false pretenses.

The HCDA Criminal Investigations Bureau is in the process of investigating the matter. Chief Investigator Mike Hislop encouraged the community to be suspicious of unsolicited emails or phone calls that ask for money or any personal identifying information even if the other party appears to be someone they know and trust. “Email, Internet and telephone based scams are becoming more and more popular and have resulted in significant financial losses throughout our nation and in our own community. Use common sense as your guide and if something doesn’t seem right, seek more information or contact local law enforcement,” Hislop added.

For more information on this or other frauds, call the District Attorney’s Office Consumer Fraud Investigator at (707) 445-7411.