Your voice is no longer proof of who you are

What a Federal Reserve warning, a US$25.6 million video call and the FBI tell us about verification.

> **“AI has fully defeated most of the ways that people authenticate currently, other than passwords.”**

Sam Altman, Federal Reserve conference, 22 July 2025

In conversation with Vice Chair Michelle Bowman

Some institutions still accept a voiceprint to move large sums

You say a challenge phrase and they just do it. Altman called that practice “crazy”, and said he was “very nervous” about an impending fraud crisis.

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transfers, about US$25.6 million, after a video call with synthetic colleagues

Every other attendee was a recreation. Nothing was hacked. A person was persuaded. Source: CNN, May 2024.

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popular voice-cloning products had no meaningful technical safeguard against cloning without consent

Consumer Reports, March 2025. A small sample, but the direction is clear.

The family emergency call

Criminals generate short clips of a loved one's voice and pose as a relative in crisis, demanding urgent money or a ransom.

FBI advice: agree a secret word or phrase with your family.

A clone copies how you sound. It does not know what you know.

- It cannot answer a secret never made public
- It cannot call back from a number you hold
- It cannot approve from a device you hold

Hang up. Call back on a number you already hold.

The attacker controls the incoming call. They do not control your address book. This is FBI advice, and it breaks live impersonation by voice or video.

- **Retire the voiceprint as a sole factor**
  Treat it as a hint, never authority to move money
- **Call back on a known number**
  For any payment or detail change
- **Two people, one approval**
  Second approver, different channel
- **Tie approval to something held**
  Passkeys or hardware keys
- **Agree a family secret word**
  Chosen face to face, never written down

Verify the channel, not the voice

Decide this week which instructions you will not act on from a voice alone.



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