

FRAUD ALERT!

Fake Check Scams

This fraud involves the usage of fake checks sent directly to your home. The checks will arrive with a letter claiming that you've won the lottery or you've been offered a stay at home job. However, don't be fooled. If you miss the warning signs, you could easily be scammed out of thousands of dollars and even be sued.

HOW THE SCAM WORKS

It seems like a dream come true, you've won millions of dollars in the lottery or you've been offered to become a paid "mystery shopper"*. All you have to do to receive your money is cash the check, keep the money that is yours, and wire the rest to an unknown individual to cover the tax expense. Although this may seem enticing, don't let yourself fall victim to this scam. If you attempt to cash this fraudulent check, your bank will originally provide you with the cash amount. The bank will not notice the problem with the check until it has gone through their system over the next several weeks. At this time, you've already wired cash to the crook that is supposedly covering the "tax expense" and you're required to pay back the bank for the checks original amount. Since the bank assumes it's your responsibility to know whether or not the check is legitimate, they expect you to pay back. If you don't, your account can be closed or frozen. In addition, you can be sued or even be charged with fraud. Although this may seem troubling, there are a variety of warning signs to look out for to avoid this fraud.

WHY IT WORKS

This scam works by gaining your trust. The fraudulent check may seem to be from a trusted company but that doesn't guarantee the legitimacy of the check. Often, this is exactly how scammers gain your trust. Without much warning, you could be scammed out of thousands of dollars and left with some serious legal trouble.

HOW TO PREVENT THE SCAM

Avoiding this scam can be an easy task, as long as you know the warning signs to look out for. In the end, it can save you from a major headache.

1. Legitimate lotteries or mystery shopper jobs don't send checks
 - a. If you receive a check from what may seem like a legitimate company, realize that lotteries and companies don't operate this way. A company or lottery would never require you to wire money to an unknown individual, tax would be paid directly to the government.
2. Trusted company names aren't always legitimate
 - a. A trusted name does not mean that you can trust the legitimacy of these checks. Scammers gain your trust through by using these names. Contact the company

by finding their information independently online. From there, you can ask the company directly whether or not to trust the check you are receiving.

3. Stop the money transfer if you think you've been scammed
 - a. Sending cash through a wire is impossible to stop once the receiving party has picked it up. The best way to stop the scammer from receiving your money is to contact the wire service if you believe you've been scammed.

***mystery shopper:** involves posing as a regular customer in order to evaluate the goods and services that a business provides. Your findings are reported back to the business, and used to improve their services.

Information retrieved from: <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0159-fake-checks>

Monthly Fraud Alerts brought to you by:

BUCKS COUNTY CRIMES AGAINST OLDER ADULTS TASK FORCE

Bucks County District Attorney's Office

215-348-6344

Bucks County Area Agency on Aging

215-348-0510

Bucks County Coroner's Office

215-348-3852

Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA)

1-800-675-6900

A Woman's Place (AWP)

1-800-220-8116

Bucks County Office of Consumer Protection

215-348-6060

Bucks County Register of Wills

215-348-6265

US Dept. of Health and Human Services/OIG

1-800-447-8477

www.crimesagainstolderadultsbucks.org

24 - HOUR HOTLINE: 1-800-490-8505