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Fraud Tip of the Week #4
"419" Nigerian Scam Involving Internet Chat Rooms
By Detective Paul Henninger

On 02/05/06, the Salem Police Department responded to a WalMart store in Salem on a report of a middle-aged man attempting to cash three \$920 counterfeit WalMart money orders. He was arrested.

The defendant alleged he received the three money orders from a woman he met in an Internet chat room. All of his communication with this person has been on the Internet. The woman claimed to be a 26-year old single female model from Africa. According to the defendant, the woman claimed to be having problems cashing some checks from a modeling shoot, because she was in Africa. The woman asked the defendant to cash the checks, then wire the money back to her associate in **Lagos, Nigeria**. The checks were mailed to the defendant.

TIP: This is a common scam. Remember what you were taught as a child, "Stranger Danger." It applies to both young and old, if you use the Internet. Sexual and financial predators use chat rooms, romance chat rooms, personal ads, and personal websites on the Internet to locate their victims. There are many Internet and mail scams where a scammer will ask you to cash a check, and wire them back money before the fraud is discovered. You may be asked to do this as a romantic favor, or as a business opportunity. If you do not respond to the "red flags," you will be caught owing money to the bank, or being arrested. Claiming you were "stupid" may not keep you out of jail.

If you want further information on this topic, stop by the Salem Police Department. There are many similar scams, and we have information on the most common ones.

Also, the FBI has a website on Common Fraud Schemes at www.fbi.gov. Click on the "Common Frauds" link in the left column of the page.
