

FRAUD TIP OF THE MONTH



Sweepstakes and Lotto Scams Continue To Be a Major Problem In Salem

By Detective Paul Henninger

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Weekly, the Salem Police Department receives complaints regarding Sweepstakes and Lotto Scams. Many are from victims who receive a "Notice of Winning" and become suspicious because they did not enter the sweepstakes and the letter contains a check to cash, so they can wire money back to pay for fees or taxes. Some "winners" do not ask any questions, deposit the checks into their bank account, wire funds to receive their Grand Prize, and come to us when the deposited check is returned as a counterfeit and they owe their bank thousands of dollars. Others just try to cash the check and have the pleasure of talking to the police when an alert teller asks a few questions about the check.

These fraudsters are very creative. They send out thousands of the same notice at one time. They use the telephone, mail or Internet (e-mails) to contact their victims. The goal of these scams is to have you "WIRE" (PRE-PAY) a fee to receive your winnings (Millions). These lottery scams are just another "**ADVANCED FEE SCAM**". Remember that term.

TIPS:

- **If it is TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, it is ILLEGAL or a SCAM!**
- **You cannot win a lottery if you did not enter that lottery.**
- **If you are asked to Pre-Pay a fee to receive winnings, it is a Scam.**
- Never cash a check sent to you by a stranger (a person you have not met face to face) if you are asked to send back any of the funds. Wiring the funds back, such as using Western Union, is a major **RED FLAG**. This includes lotteries and internet romances.
- Federal law prohibits foreign lotteries from operating in the U.S. This is for your protection against scams, including Identity Theft. A person inside the borders of the U.S. cannot legally purchase a foreign lottery ticket, even on the Internet. If you want to buy a Canadian Lottery ticket, you must go to Canada.
- If you want to buy a lottery ticket from another state, such as the Washington State Lottery, you must physically go to that state to make the purchase. Con Artists will tell you differently. If you do, kiss your money goodbye before you send it.
 - You may buy a ticket in Oregon for "PowerBall", a multi-state lottery, because Oregon is part of the "Powerball" lottery association.
- State-regulated lotteries, such as the Oregon Lottery and "Powerball", are safe to participate in, although odds are you will never win the "big prize." While in Oregon, you can only legally participate in the "Oregon Lottery" and "PowerBall".
- The "sweepstakes industry" inside the U.S. is virtually un-monitored. Many of them are deceptive or a scam. Enter at your own risk. Review my sweepstakes fraud tip on the Salem Police Department website before doing so. I do not enter any of them, because it is virtually impossible to determine if they are legitimate.

Additional Fraud Tips are posted on the Salem Police Department's website at www.cityofsalem.net/departments/police.