

PROCEED WITH CAUTION

ADVANCE FEE SCAMS

Advance fee scams are easy to spot: You pay a fee in advance for receiving a credit card, loan or scholarship. In return, you get nothing valuable or nothing at all, and may expose yourself to identity theft by giving out personal information.

Credit cards with fees will be billed once you receive the card so do not pay upfront. Fake loan ads may look real, using logos of real banks and credit unions, but the phone number in the ad will lead you to an imposter on a cell phone who asks for your personal information, tells you where to wire money for a fee, then disappears, stealing your cash and identity. Beware of offers for scholarship searches that require paying an upfront fee. Scholarship information is available free and can be researched online and in libraries.

JURY DUTY SCAM

Most of us take the summons for jury duty seriously, but enough people skip out on their civic duty that a new and ominous kind of scam has surfaced. In this con, someone calls pretending to be a court official who threateningly says a warrant has been issued for your arrest because you didn't show up for jury duty. The caller claims to be a jury coordinator. If you protest that you never received a summons for jury duty, the scammer asks you for your Social Security number and date of birth so he or she can verify the information and cancel the arrest warrant. Sometimes they even ask for credit card numbers. CBS News reports that those who fall prey to this scam inevitably have their identity stolen.

This scam is particularly menacing because of the intimidation tactics used over the phone to bully people into giving information under the false pretense of "official court business". The FBI warns that the judicial system does not contact people telephonically to ask for personal information and have issued nationwide alerts on their web sites, warning consumers about the fraud. Visit this website for additional information: www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel05/092805.htm

FRAUD JOBS

Fraudulent job opportunities often involve work-at-home offers. The "reshipper" job offers a good salary for receiving packages at your house and reshipping them overseas. The scam basically has you pay out-of-pocket to ship the pack-

ages overseas, you get paid with a fake check, and the packages often contain stolen and fake credit cards.

Steer clear of people you may encounter in your job hunt who promise you a job, but only if you will pay any upfront fees (even if a money-back guarantee is promised). Use employment services that charge the employer, not the potential employee.

Ignore offers that promise insider information for federal government jobs. All federal government jobs are announced to the public.

BOGUS CHARITY

If you want to give to charity, by all means, give away, but check out the charity first.

We recommend never giving payment information to anyone calling or e-mailing you, claiming to be with a charity. Ask to have paperwork or their organization sent to you so that you may submit your payment directly. You can then research the organization online to make sure it's legitimate and be sure to verify the correct contact information. If the charity representative pressures you to give immediately, get even more suspicious. Legitimate charities withstand scrutiny, and never hesitate to prove they are who they say they are. Refer to www.give.org to determine the legitimacy of a charity.

USE COMMON SENSE

If it seems too good to be true, it probably is. Remember that a con artist makes a career of using excuses and explanations to lead you away from your common sense. When dealing with your money and personal information, never allow yourself to be rushed, threatened or persuaded against your judgment.

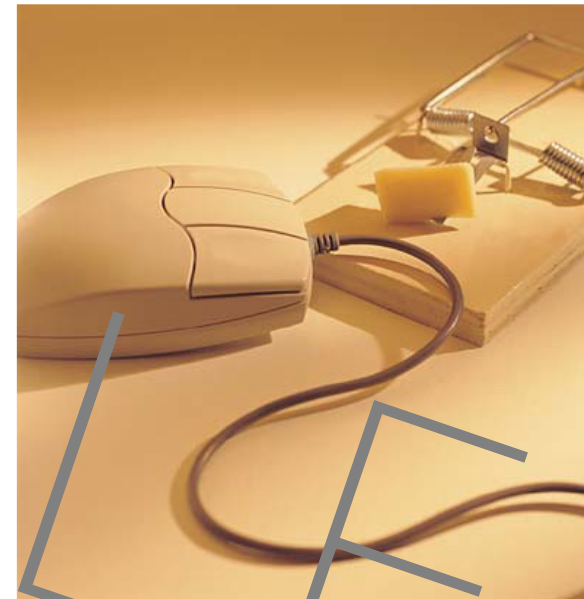
Don't believe offers that claim to have found a way around the law, such as reasons you don't have to pay your bills or taxes, promises to clean up your credit history or claims that you can get a new Social Security number or a new driver's license if yours was revoked. And claims of "miracle diets or pills" that can enhance your features or help you lose weight should be regarded with skepticism at best. An unofficial source to check the authenticity of a variety of scams is www.snopes.com.

Keep in mind that offers that are too good to be true aren't confined to the Internet or telemarketers. They can also be found in mail offers, the ads in the back of magazines and in brick-and-mortar stores. Stay vigilant and trust your gut.

Source: Bankrate.com

SCAM ALERT!

Be On Your Guard!



Scams can cause you to lose your money, your identity and more!



With the evolution of technology and Internet access has come the sophistication of scam artists who have menaced society for ages! As consumers, now more than ever, we must be cautious about the information we share online, by phone and by mail. The

best protection from being taken advantage of is to never give information or agree to pay for something for which you have not initiated contact. If a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is!

We've collected a few modern scams that have left many people without their life savings or under mounds of paperwork trying to rebuild what once was a quality credit record.

SWEEPSTAKES/ LOTTERY SCAM

THE SETUP: You are a WINNER! Not really, but that's what this scam leads you to believe. You are notified of a large cash prize that can be claimed by depositing a check (which is enclosed in the envelope) representing the tax and related fees. The instructions direct the recipient to deposit the check and then wire the amount to a location that cannot be traced.



THE SCAM: Although the scam may have variations, the end result is that the deposited check is returned usually because the account does not exist, the recipient's funds have been wired out and no winnings are ever received!

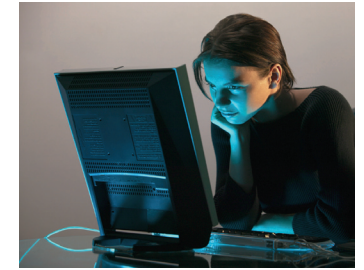
THE SOLUTION: Don't believe you have won anything for which you have not entered or applied. Additionally, never wire funds to a location or person that is unknown to you.

"419" OR NIGERIAN LETTER

THE SETUP: Recipients receive a letter or e-mail offering an opportunity to share a percentage of millions of dollars, which the author is trying to transfer out of Nigeria. The recipient is asked to send a financial institution name and account numbers, other identifying information along with increasingly larger amounts of money for various reasons, and in extreme cases, convinces victims to travel to Nigeria for legal reasons.

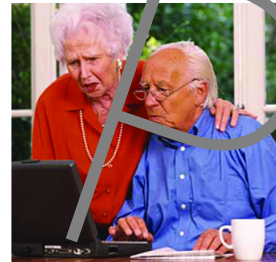
THE SCAM: The information obtained is often used to impersonate the victim, draining bank accounts and racking up credit card balances until all assets are taken. The Nigerian government is unsympathetic to victims because they have actually conspired to remove funds from the country, a violation of Section 419 of the Nigerian commercial code.

THE SOLUTION: Do not believe the promise of large sums of money for your cooperation. Never send money to foreign destinations or share your account information if the identification of the recipient is not fully known to you. If you receive a letter or e-mail from Nigeria asking for personal or banking information, do not reply in any way and forward the letter to the U.S. Secret Service or FBI.



SOCIAL SECURITY SCAM

THE SETUP: Potential victims receive an e-mail with the subject, "Cost-of-Living for 2007 update." The message appears to be from the Social Security Administration, and provides information about the 7.3% benefit increase for 2007. It contains the following, "NOTE: We now need you to update your personal information. If this is not completed by a specific date, we will be forced to suspend your account indefinitely." The reader is then directed to a Web site designed to look like Social Security's Internet Web site.

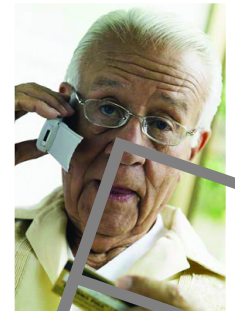


THE SCAM: Once directed to the phony Web site, the individual is asked to register for a password and to confirm their identity by providing personal information such as the individual's Social Security number, bank account information, and credit card information. This information is then used for various forms of identity theft and other fraud.

THE SOLUTION: You should never provide your Social Security number or other personal information over the Internet or by telephone unless you are extremely confident of the source to whom you are providing the information. To report receipt of this e-mail message or other suspicious activity to Social Security's Office of Inspector General, please call the OIG Hotline at 1-800-269-0271. A Public Fraud Reporting form is also available online at OIG's Web site, www.socialsecurity.gov/oig.

CONFIDENCE GAMES

THE SETUP: Generally initiated as a phone call, the offender pretends to be in a position of authority (e.g., a bank or credit union examiner), or otherwise trustworthy contact, concocting a story to get the victim to hand over cash, personal information or account numbers.



THE SCAM: After the victim makes a "good faith" payment to the offender or provides information, the victim never hears from the offender again and often finds that accounts have been drained of cash.

THE SOLUTION: Officials will NEVER request this type of information over the phone. That includes your credit union staff. If you receive a call from someone posing as a bank/ credit union examiner or staff person, please contact the financial institution immediately.