

## **CURRENT SCAMS**

**RECENT SCAM:** Unknown individuals (probably from Canada or Nigeria) are calling elderly individuals and advising them that they can receive a "Free Medical Card" if they provide the caller with their Bank Account Number. Advise and Alert your friends and relatives to **NOT** provide any Bank Account.

### **HOME REPAIR SCAM ALERTS - ROOFING SCAM AND DRIVEWAY SCAM**

Scammers approach homeowners (usually elderly homeowners) and offer them a "deal" on roofing or asphalt paving. They price the job at "several hundred dollars", but on completion they insist the homeowner pay them thousands of dollars. Homeowners are often so intimidated that they write checks on the spot for the inflated prices

**PLEASE** warn your neighbors and relatives: Do not agree to any home repair work from persons who approach you. Get references before agreeing to have any work done. Pay only the agreed-on (in writing) price. Call the police if you feel you are being intimidated or threatened. **BANKS** are alerted to be careful when cashing large checks on elderly customers' accounts presented by out-of-town or out-of-state individuals.

### **GIFT CARD SCAM ALERT**

Be careful how you purchase Gift Cards for holiday gift-giving. It appears that it is safer to purchase cards directly from a clerk than select them from open display shelves. Crooks can copy numbers from gift cards on store racks. Then, after the card is purchased and activated, buyers use them to shop online by entering the card numbers. So do the crooks. They phone an 800 number to check on the balances for card numbers they have copied. When they discover activated cards, they use the card numbers to buy merchandise on a store's web site.

The legitimate owner of the gift card may find the account empty before they even have an opportunity to make purchases.

### **BAIT & SWITCH SCAM**

A suspect will approach the victim and try to scam the victim out of money using a large amount of cash. If you have any information about this incident or similar incidents, please contact the [DPD Swindle Unit, 214-671-3513](tel:214-671-3513).

### **"PIGEON DROP SCAM" ALERT**

Please go to: ["Pigeon Drop Scam" Alert](#) (PDF format). An ALERT from Newell, TX, Police Department about a group of travelling scam artists who are doing the "Pigeon Drop" scam in parking lots.

## **ON-LINE GAMBLING AWARD SCAM FROM CANADA**

A new scam from Canada has been reported to SAPD. The scammers, using the company name "Prudential Security, Inc.", send out phony award claims with phony cashier's checks. The company claims to be an on-line gambling company that has awarded the victim a cashier's check ranging from \$3000 to \$5000. The victim must call a phone number to authorize the release of the money, and must provide the scammers with the victim's bank account number. The scammers tell the victim that the cashier's check is only a small portion of the actual money the victim has won - the actual amount is supposed to be between \$250,000 to \$500,000.

**DO NOT FALL FOR THIS SCAM!!**

The phone numbers of the scammers have been tracked to boiler rooms in Canada. Any person playing on-line poker or gambling games is a target. If you have been approached for this scam, please call DPD to report the incident (214-671-3513), and also advise the US Postal Inspector.

## **NIGERIAN CASHIERS' CHECK SCAM**

After posting home for sale on a web page, the victim receives an offer from a buyer. The buyer then asked the victim to deposit a \$10,000 cashier's check in their bank account, and then forward \$8,000 to a travel agency to pay for the prospective buyer to fly to the location and finish the purchase process. When the victim replies to the "buyer" that they would not participate in forwarding money to a third party, the "buyer" tells the victim, considered the house sold to him, and the victim "must" deposit the \$10,000.

**This is still another version of the Nigerian Cashiers' Check Scam. The "buyer" wants the \$8000 (and possible access to the sellers' bank account), not the house. Anytime someone wants to send you a cashier's check or money order, have you deposit it into your account, and then send them - or someone - money FROM your account, IT IS A SCAM! The cashier's check or money order will turn out to be worthless, and you will have lost whatever money you sent to them - and possibly more.**

### **ASPHALT PAVING SCAM**

They approached the victim with the usual story: "left-over asphalt from another job", and offered to do his drive for half-price. The victim realized later that he had been over charged and the work was half done.

**Dallas area residents and businesses should be on the look-out for ANY paving or construction workers who approach you unsolicited, with "special bargains" on repair work that you did not order and probably do not need. Travelers are Professional con artists and can usually talk unsuspecting residents or business owners into cooperating in their scam.**

### **INTERNET RELAY BOGUS ORDER SCAM**

NEW TWIST ON OLD SCAM: Scammers, mostly in Nigeria, but also in a variety of other countries, have increased their use of new technology in a new twist on the old "419 Scam". Now using INTERNET RELAY (usually through MCI or AT&T), they place a relay call to a US business that sells through the web, and place a large order for merchandise. (Internet Relay is designed so deaf or hearing impaired persons can communicate by internet "phone", an internet version of TTY.) The scammers usually provide several credit card numbers to pay for the merchandise. (The cards later turn out to be stolen or otherwise bogus.) The destination for the merchandise is sometimes England, the Netherlands, or Nigeria (Red flag) sometimes, the person ordering the merchandise offers to have the order picked up, saving the merchant the trouble of shipping, saving the merchant the trouble of shipping. There have been numerous instances of this scam in recent years, and an article on MSNBC summarizing the problem is posted at: ["Con Artists Target Phone System for Deaf"](#).

Any Dallas business that believes they have been the victim of this crime should contact their substation Investigative Unit.

### **ID THEFT & JURY DUTY SCAM**

Alerts have recently been issued by several states' Attorneys General as well as by the Army concerning a "Jury Duty Scam". Identity thieves pose as representatives of the local court system and obtain personal information from victims under the guise of obtaining "jury duty" information or by telling the victim that they have missed a jury duty summons. The thieves then use this information for identity theft purposes. BE ALERT: Your local court already has all of the information about you necessary for jury duty lists. A detailed discussion of this scam is posted at: [SNOPE.COM](http://SNOPE.COM)

### **IMMIGRATION PAPERWORK SCAM**

This SCAM offers Mexican Nationals assistance with obtaining paperwork to provide them with legal immigration status in the U.S. (work permit or naturalization documents). The suspect tells the victims that he will take care of all the paperwork, collects their money, and then never delivers on what he promised. The fee the suspect collects from each victim is in the thousands of dollars.

### **"CREDIT FIX" SCAM**

A victim found an advertisement from an out-of-state company which claimed they could help people with bad credit. The victim called the listed phone number and was told to send \$500 through Western Union. The victim was told that this money would be used to clear up the resident's bad credit problems, and that the company would also send the resident back \$5000 in the future. The victim sent the money and soon after discovered that the company's phone and fax numbers had been disconnected.

### **"FREE RIDE" FOR ELDERLY SCAM**

In this scam, the driver of a vehicle pulls up to an elderly person at a bus stop or walking along a road and offers them a "free ride." Often, the driver, a latin female who speaks Spanish and English, leads the elderly person to believe they know each other. Once they get in the car, the driver takes them to their destination, but manages to take their wallet or purse as she helps them get out of the car.

## **"NO-RISK, FREE TRIAL" CONFUSION**

"No-Risk, Free-Trial", offers are received through the mail for "discount buyers clubs". The envelope contains a check for \$10.00, made out to the resident, which the resident is encouraged to sign and cash or deposit. The next month, the resident is shocked to see that their credit card account has been charged \$8.99 for "membership fee". The residents were also puzzled as to how their credit card had been charged, when they did not supply an account number. Similar offers for "trial memberships", with accompanying surprise charges, are also made through telemarketers.

Companies sending out such offers include in the fine print that the "trial membership" must be cancelled in a specified number of days, or the "member's" credit card will be charged. The companies sending out the offers have access to credit card numbers through affiliation with the bank or company owning the credit card account, so do not need for the "member" to provide the credit card number.

For more information on the problems and issues surrounding these "No-Risk, Free-Trial" offers, please go to the web pages of:

[FRAUD.ORG](http://FRAUD.ORG) and

[National Association of Attorneys General](http://National Association of Attorneys General)

Submitted by Tom De Chant, Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs.

## **NEW TWIST ON LOTTO/PRIZE SCAM**

A victim receives a call from a person who said he is with "Publishers Clearing House", offering the victim \$250,000 if he would wire \$2,500.00 by "Money-Gram" to any family member. The victim sent \$1,250, by Money-Gram wire, to his mother in Del Rio, Texas. The resident received a receipt from the Money-Gram company. However, the resident later learned that his mother, in Del Rio, never received the money, and it was later learned that the Money-Gram had been diverted, by an unknown person, to a location in Canada. It was also learned that an unknown person in Canada had already claimed the money.

### **ASPHALT PAVERS SCAM ALERT**

Law enforcement agencies in Texas as well as in other Southern states have sent out alerts about several groups of "Travelers" who are doing Asphalt Paving Scams, particularly on elderly homeowners. In these scams, the Travelers (usually described as white males, in their 30's or 40's, driving nice pickups and pulling trailers with paving equipment), approach the resident with a "too good to be true" discount deal on doing paving work, requiring payment up front. After the resident has paid, the Travelers either do a very quick, slipshod job (often just spreading a little tar on top of the drive), or disappear altogether.

In a few cases, the Travelers actually dump asphalt on the driveway first, and then demand payment from the resident, making threats of harm if not paid.

DO NOT agree to any repair or paving work without checking on the workers. (See the [BASIC CONTRACTOR INFORMATION FORM](#) linked here.)

Always call the police if someone threatens you.

### **HOME IMPROVEMENT SCAM**

In one case, the complainant believes the remodeling workers were responsible for the disappearance of a large dollar amount of jewelry; in a second case, "owners" of the same remodeling company took a check for \$600 from the elderly resident, but did not return to do the work.

NOTICE: All residents considering home remodeling or repairs should only deal with repair companies/persons they already know, or should have the company representative complete the [BASIC CONTRACTOR INFORMATION](#) link.

### **GREEN CARD LOTTERY SCAM**

Local residents report receiving offers from a commercial company to assist them, for a fee, with filling out application papers for the "Green Card Lottery" (the US State Department's Diversity Visa -- DV -- Lottery).

The Federal Trade Commission has issued a Scam Alert concerning "unscrupulous businesses and attorneys who claim that, for a fee, they can make it easier for you to win the DV Lottery." Information on the DV Lottery (and on the scams that have grown up around it) is posted at: [Diversity Visa Lottery: Read the Rules, Avoid the Rip-Offs](#).

## **BOGUS AGENT SCAM**

**First Incident:** An elderly San Antonio resident was recently having some plumbing repair work done at her home when she was approached by two "agents": one identified herself as an "insurance agent" and the second as a representative the the District Attorney's Office. The two "agent" suspects told the elderly resident that the plumbers were going to scam her, and the two agents were there to apprehend them. The suspects told the elderly resident that she would need to cash a \$12,000 check and split it with the suspects. One suspect told the resident that the plumbers would ask for more money the following day, and that when the suspects gave the plumbers their share of the \$12,000, the "agent" suspects would arrest the plumbers.

### **SUGGESTED: "BASIC CONTRACTOR INFORMATION LINK"**

The Northeast Division has suggested that elderly residents who are arranging with contractors for Home Repairs of any sort (roofing, foundation, driveway repairs, painting, wiring, etc.) use the [BASIC CONTRACTOR INFORMATION LINK](#)

The link assists the homeowner in documenting the contractor's identification, contact information, details of the work to be done, and the agreed cost of the work to be done. All homeowners are advised to "know your contractor", and not to do business with suspicious contractors who appear at your door offering to do repairs that you did not request or did not know you needed.

**CALL THE POLICE IF SOMEONE TRIES TO PRESSURE YOU INTO LETTING THEM DO REPAIRS YOU DID NOT REQUEST!**

### **SCHOLARSHIP SCAM INFORMATION!!**

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbot has issued an alert concerning a current SCHOLARSHIP SCAM. A company called the College Funding Center has charged \$1000 and promised to assist students find scholarship opportunities. For more information on this and similar scams, as well as information on where to file a complaint if you have been the victim of this scam, please go to the [Texas Attorney General's Consumer Alerts](#) web page.

## **ROOF REPAIR SCAM ALERT**

Home Repair Scams are frequently discussed on the SCAMNET pages, particularly scams targeting elderly residents. During the past year there have been a number of incidents reported involving roof repairs that were "forced" on an elderly victim. In these scams, the suspect comes to the door and tells the elderly resident that they (the suspect) had installed the roof on the house many years ago, and was returning to do necessary upkeep or repairs (or, in one case, the suspect told the elderly resident that he could see shingles loose and the roof obviously needed repair). When the resident expresses doubt, or refuses the repairs, the con artist uses any number of stories or ways to finally convince the resident to give him a check. Repairs are never done, or if "work" is done, it is superficial and most likely not needed in the first place.

BEWARE of any repair persons who come to your door unsolicited. Call the police if you believe someone is trying to scam you or pressure you into paying for repairs that you do not want or need.

## **DEBT COLLECTION SCAM ALERT**

A business will contact a local resident (often an elderly resident) by phone, claiming the resident owes a large amount of money (for services or for goods). When the resident disclaims any knowledge of the debt or overdue account, the "collection agency" threatens the resident with stronger collection tactics (going to court, etc.), but offers to accept a percent of the money "owed" to settle the account. In at least one incident, the "collection agency" will sometimes mention a connection with a local Police Department, apparently to make the resident believe there would be a police response if they did not pay up.

## **CITIBANK ID VALIDATION SCAM ALERT**

Citibank has issued an ALERT concerning fraudulent e-mails Citibank account holders may receive asking them to validate their account information, including entering their PIN number and other personal information into a web page. For more information on this SCAM, please go to the Citibank ["Fraudulent E-Mails"](#) web page.

The same type of scam has also been sent out using a variety of bank names, the names of various credit cards (Visa, etc.), as well as the names of other financial institutions. ALL have the same goal: to get you to tell them your PRIVATE account information, so they can use it for fraudulent purposes.

## **IRS CONSUMER ALERT: ADVANCE CHILD TAX CREDIT SCAM**

The Internal Revenue Service issued a SCAM ALERT on June 18, 2003, warning taxpayers about a new scam targeting potential recipients of the Advance Child Tax Credit. The IRS has seen isolated instances of this new scheme.

### **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

A taxpayer receives a telephone call from a person who promises to speed up the payment of the Advance Child Tax Credit checks. The catch is the taxpayer must agree to a \$39.99 charge to a credit card.

**The IRS reminds taxpayers that no person or organization can "speed up" the payment of tax benefits.**

**IN REALITY:** Taxpayers do not have to take any action to get the new benefit, which features an advance payment for up to \$400 per qualifying child. The Treasury Department and IRS will perform all the calculations and automatically mail a notice and a check to each eligible taxpayer, beginning the week of July 25, 2003.

**SIMILAR SCAMS:** Under the new scam, the IRS is seeing a continuation of a trend that emerged earlier this year when the families of those serving in the Armed Forces were targeted. In both of these schemes, scam artists use current events to prey on unsuspecting victims. The scams also feature callers seeking credit card information to get taxpayers to pay for special benefits. If the taxpayer agrees to the charge and provides a credit card number or other sensitive personal information, she could find a much larger charge to her account. By the time the taxpayer realizes something is wrong, the scam operator is long gone, possibly victimizing another taxpayer.

**WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?** If you encounter this latest tax scam or suspect tax fraud or abuse in some other situation, report it to your nearest IRS office. When in doubt, seek help from the IRS or a tax professional.

**You can also call the IRS TAX FRAUD HOTLINE at 1-800-829-0433.**

## **CASHIER'S CHECK/INTERNET SALES SCAM PLUS RELATED INVESTMENT SCAMS!!**

Alerts have been issued by Frost National Bank, the FDIC, the Comptroller of the Currency, and other agencies concerning **COUNTERFEIT CASHIER'S CHECKS** that are currently being used in various scams originating in internet commerce or e-mail solicitations.

All the scams have in common the payment to the victim of a Cashier's Check for an amount much greater than what the victim is due (for the sale of an item, etc.). The "buyer" usually tells the victim/seller that "someone owes him money" and the victim can take the check in payment, deposit it, and refund the extra funds back to the "buyer" (who is generally in Nigeria or another African country). However, the Cashier's Check is later found to be counterfeit, and the victim is out not only the balance, but also the item sold (if it has been shipped).

One of the more popular Cashier's Checks used in this scam so far during 2003 is a counterfeit Frost National Bank Cashier's Check. 98% have surfaced with the name of Joshua Acosta as the "remitter". (Acosta was a victim of this scam chain.) More than 300 victims have been identified from every state in the U.S. so far, with potential losses amounting to over \$3 million.

This scam of providing a large amount Cashier's Check and agreeing to a refund of the balance is also used in variations of the very popular "Nigerian Investment Scam", in the newer variation the "Iraq Investment Scam" ("...desperate to get money out of Iraq..."), as well as purchase offers from African and Middle Eastern countries for items advertised for sale over the internet (vehicles are very popular targets), for "signing bonus" fees paid to victims who were offered non-existent jobs, plus a large variety of similar scams.

**HOW TO AVOID THIS SCAM:** Cashier's Checks from Frost Bank and other banks are generally safe and secure payment methods. **HOWEVER:**

- If you are offered a "deal" that sounds too good to be true, and
- it involves you agreeing to accept a Cashier's Check for more money than you are owed, and
- you are asked to remit ANYTHING to the "buyer" (or to the foreign investor),
- **DONT BE FOOLED!! IT IS A SCAM.**

Also see these pages:

[OCC Alert on Frost Cashier's Checks](#)  
[Check Alerts from the FDIC](#)

