

FROM THE OFFICE OF WELD COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
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Fraud Alert!

2008 SCAM RECAP



As 2008 draws to a close, let's review some of the most prevalent concerns we heard about during the past year.

TRAFFIC STOPS: There were several media stories this past year about people, usually women, getting pulled over by someone impersonating a law enforcement officer. Remember, if you are being pulled over there are some things you can do to ensure that the stop is legitimate: slow down, turn on your hazard lights, acknowledge that you see the officer, and make your way to a well-lit, well-populated area. Ask to see the officer's badge and, if needed,

call 911 and ask dispatch if they, in fact, do have an officer out at your location.

LOTTERY SCAMS: Lottery scams, the Nigerian letter scam and shipping scams are all basically the same. You are sent a cashier's check and a phony story. You are then asked to deposit the check, which was written for an amount greater than it should have been, and wire the overage to another location. The scam is that the check is fraudulent and you will be responsible for the funds drawn on it. Remember, the odds of winning a lottery are millions to one, and it is illegal to play a foreign lottery in the United States.

WORK FROM HOME: Beware of any work-from-home advertisement that includes "import/export specialist," "marketing manager," or "financial manager" in the job description. These types of scams involve "hiring" people to reship goods for a fraudulent company. The company sends the new "employee" a cashier's check to cover reshipping costs. The "employee" then writes the company a check for the remaining funds, less their commission. The "employee," however, has inadvertently not only deposited a phony cashier's check but also written a personal check based on those fraudulent funds. These scams work very much like the lottery scams.

VISHING, PHISHING, SMISHING: The American vocabulary is ever expanding, and these three terms all describe ways con artists get you to reveal your personal identifying information either over the phone, through email or through text messages on your cell phone. Never provide your personal information (bank account numbers, credit card numbers, Social Security numbers, etc) to anyone — especially if the contact (message, email or text message) was not initiated by you.

AUTO THEFT: You lock the doors to your home to protect your valuables...do the same with your car. Roll up windows, lock doors and do not leave anything of value in your car while it is unattended. Thieves look for items in cars that they can pawn or trade for cash or drugs. And don't think you can outsmart the thief — there is no place in your car or trunk that a thief hasn't already thought to look for your "hidden" valuables.

When presented with something you think might be a scam, remember: if you didn't play, you didn't win; if it sounds too good to be true it probably is; and don't react without research.

Contact your local police agency if you think you are a victim of a crime. To contact the Weld County District Attorney's Office, call (970) 356-4010 ext. 4702.