

FROM THE OFFICE OF WELD COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
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Fraud Alert!

JUNK MAIL, PAPER OR ELECTRONIC, IS NOT ONLY ANNOYING BUT ALSO POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS



We are bombarded with it daily — **junk mail**. It shows up in our mailbox and in our email box; message after message promising a great deal, alerting us of a problem or announcing that we have won something. How do companies get these annoying messages to us and what harm do they really pose?

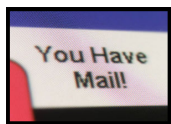
Mailing lists and emailing lists are compiled in a variety of different ways. When you enter your email address onto a site (whether ordering something or registering to use the site) your email address is placed on a larger list. When you enter a draw-

ing at the mall or the grocery store, your name and address are placed on a larger list. If you respond to an unsolicited email, your email address is placed on a larger list. These lists are then sold over and over and over again to companies (legitimate or not) who then contact you about their goods or services *or scams*. How can you limit this? **Never respond to unsolicited emails**; by responding you are telling that company that your email address is a valid one with an active user on the other end. **Do not sign up for free giveaways**; these giveaways are often put together for the sole purpose of creating mailing lists. Finally, **opt out of direct mailing lists by calling 1-888-5-OPT-OUT**.

Paper junk mail: Take a moment and think about the types of potentially harmful (financially) things you receive in your mailbox during the week: credit card applications (which someone can steal and fill out, including changing the mailing address so that you do not know an account has been opened in your name); checks from credit card issuers urging you to use the available credit on your card; any type of offer that asks you to respond by filling out an application (these can be stolen and filled out by anyone). Always open all mail, remove all documents that contain personal information or contain an application to fill out and **SHRED** those pages!



Email junk mail: This type of junk mail is even more frustrating to sort through than paper junk mail. **Don't open emails from unknown recipients** whether it is regarding "the deal of the century" or a "problem with your account" (usually from a bank you have never even heard of). Delete these emails immediately and **never open any attachments**. The two primary scams of this type of junk mail are to either 1) get you to provide personal identifying information or 2) to download malicious software onto your computer. If the IRS, the lottery, your bank, the courts, any business or government organization is trying to reach you — they won't do it via email unless you have specifically instructed them to do so.



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.