



FAKE CHECK SCAMS

Fake check scams are a fast-growing fraud that could cost you thousands of dollars. It all starts when someone gives you a realistic-looking check or money order and asks you to send cash somewhere in return. It's phony, and so is the person's story, but that may take weeks to discover. Even though you didn't know the check was fake, you are out the money because the money you wired cannot be retrieved and you are responsible for checks you deposit.

Warning Signs

The scammers use high quality printers and scanners to make the checks look real. Some contain authentic-looking watermarks. These counterfeit checks are printed with the names and addresses of legitimate financial institutions. Even though the bank, account and routing numbers may be real, the check can still be a fake. Watch for these warning signs to help determine if you are being scammed:

- Scammers befriend you and ask you to cash a check or money order as a favor.
- They want to buy something that you are selling and send a check or money order for more than you are asking.
- They hire you to work at home and ask you to deposit a check or money order in your account as part of your job. Sometimes they have you open a new account for the "business."
- They send you a check or money order as an "advance" on the millions that you are going to receive from a sweepstakes, lottery or inheritance.
- They offer you a foreign business deal and send you a check or money order as an advance on your profits.



Protecting Yourself _____

Here's how to avoid a counterfeit check scam:

- Throw away any offer that asks you to pay for a prize or a gift.
- Resist the urge to enter foreign lotteries.
- Know who you are dealing with, and never wire money to strangers.
- If you are selling something, do not accept a check for more than the selling price, no matter how tempting the offer or how convincing the story.
- As a seller, you can suggest an alternative way for the buyer to pay, like an escrow service or an online payment service.
- If you accept payment by check, ask for a check drawn on a local bank or a bank with a local branch.
- If the buyer insists that you wire back funds, end the transaction immediately.
- Resist any pressure to "act now."

If you think you've been targeted by a fake check scam, don't deposit it. Report the incident to the following agencies:

- **SD Division of Consumer Protection:**
1-800-300-1986 (in-state only), 605-773-4400
or www.state.sd.us/attorney/office/divisions/consumer
- **Federal Trade Commission:**
1-877-382-4357 or www.ftc.gov
- **National Consumers League's Fraud Center:**
www.fraud.org or www.fakechecks.org



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