

Watch Out for Lottery Fraud

It sounds too good to be true. Out of the blue you receive a telephone call or e-mail message telling you that you are the lucky winner of a foreign lottery. It might be Canada. It could be Spain, or any of a host of other countries. You might have won hundreds-of-thousands, or even millions of dollars.

It sounds legitimate. The person on the other end of the line is a tax agent or a representative of some other government organization. The caller seems both reputable and sincere. He or she has answers to all your questions and is anxious to get the money to you as soon as possible. There's just one catch. In order for the caller to release the funds, you must first pay any taxes or fees associated with your winnings.

Perhaps you hesitate at this point. But the caller is convincing. And after all, what is a few thousand dollars now, when you will receive millions in just days or weeks?

The caller instructs you to send the taxes or fees using a money transfer service. It's fast, it's easy and it will enable them to get the money to you sooner. So you send the money. But wait. It seems that there are further fees that must be paid and you are instructed to send additional funds – again using a money transfer service.

The calls continue until you are no longer able or willing to send the funds. Unfortunately, the lottery winnings are never received. You have been the victim of a scam.

Western Union takes the issue of consumer fraud very seriously. We value our consumers and know they work hard for their money. When our consumers lose by becoming the victim of fraud, we feel like we lose too. That's why we're working to create greater awareness of the various types of consumer fraud.

Lottery scams

Who falls victim to lottery scams? Sometimes it's the unsuspecting. Sometimes it's people down on their luck - people whose circumstances leave them willing to take a risk for a chance at a better life. Unfortunately, these risks seldom, if ever, pay off. Although law enforcement agencies work diligently to catch these criminals, consumers are rarely able to recoup their losses.

Here are a few tips to help prevent you from becoming the victim of a lottery scam:

- The Western Union Money Transfer service is a great way to send money to people you know and trust. We do not recommend using this service when sending money to a stranger or someone whose identity you can't verify.
- Legitimate organizations will not demand money before they award lottery winnings or other prizes.
- If you have a concern about a solicitation, talk to family members or an attorney or even local police before making the financial decision to send money for a lottery prize.
- Be aware that it is illegal for anyone from a foreign country to solicit lottery ticket sales in the United States.
- Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

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