

Don't get caught being a victim in a lottery scam

In recent years, lottery scammers have targeted New Zealanders. Don't get caught by these scams! These scammers are pretending to be legitimate companies and taking victims' hard-earned money. Do NOT fall for their scams.

How these lottery scams typically work. Previously, scammers have impersonated Malaysian travel companies, sending brochures and scratch-and-win lottery tickets via mail to victims. These tickets will claim that the victim wins money.

Now scammers are making contact by phone, email or mail, and impersonating lottery companies with names like "The Winner's Circle" or "International Winners Association (IWA)". They will invite victims to enter an international lottery by asking for their credit card details so that the victims can pay for their share in a syndicate in the lottery.

The scammers will then inform victims that their syndicate has won, but first they must send money (usually via money transfer) to pay for "taxes" before the so-called winnings can be released.

In some cases, after the victims send money, scammers may contact them again to inform them that something has occurred, perhaps a member of the group of winners has passed away, and, as a result, the winnings were redistributed and the shares the victims will receive has increased.

This results in the scammer asking for more money to be sent via money transfer.

In some cases, the scammers may ask the victim to complete a bank cheque

made payable to an individual and to mail it to an address in New Zealand.

Of course, once the scammers think they have gotten all the money that they can possibly get from the victim, the scammers are never heard from again.

Don't fall victim to fraud.

You work hard for your money. Never let a few minutes with a scammer take from you what has taken years or a lifetime to earn.

Detective Sergeant Bridgett Doell from the Financial Crime Unit states: "if it is too good to be true, it probably is – if in doubt, seek professional advice."

Tips to avoid falling victim to the lottery/prize scam – help protect yourself

- Never send money to pay for taxes or fees on lottery or prize winnings. Legitimate sweepstakes or lotteries never tell winners to send money to pay for taxes or fees to receive the prize.
- Never give your banking information to unknown individuals or businesses.
- Do your research. Check with trusted government sources to confirm whether or not the company is legitimate. Such sources may include, law enforcement, consumer affairs or scamwatch.govt.nz



- Never send a money transfer to some one you have not met in person.

Wayne Howarth, Western Union Regional Fraud Risk Manager for Asia Pacific advises:

"Awareness is the best defense against scams. Legitimate lotteries are governed by local legislation that typically requires any entrant to be a local resident to claim any prize winnings. Never send money to claim a lottery prize or winnings."

To learn more about common scams and how to help protect yourself from fraud, visit our website at wu.com/fraudawareness and the New Zealand Department of Consumer Affairs at consumer-protection.govt.nz.

For more tips against scams, watch:

- Tempting you with big financial prizes at www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKYm2EWIPWg
- Useful scam prevention advice at www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDt4SEvQZwK

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