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Scam Alert – International Lottery Scams

by Stacie Harris, Economic Crimes Unit

Numerous phone calls to the Office of the District Attorney's Office have been made regarding foreign lottery scams.

The Federal Trade Commission says most promotions for foreign lotteries are likely to be phony. Lottery hustlers use victims' bank account numbers to make unauthorized withdrawals or their credit card numbers to run up additional charges. Words of caution for consumers who are thinking about responding to a foreign lottery:

- If you purchase one foreign lottery ticket, expect many more bogus offers for lottery or investment "opportunities." Your name will be placed on "sucker lists" that fraudulent telemarketers buy and sell.
- Keep your credit card and bank account numbers to yourself. Scam artists often ask for them during an unsolicited sales pitch.
- There are no secret systems for winning foreign lotteries. Your chances of winning more than the cost of your tickets are slim to none.
- It's not a matter of if, but WHEN, the bank states the bogus check is not valid, that you will be held responsible for the money that you have spent against that check. You will also be held responsible for any returned check fees associated with that bogus check as well.
- **Most importantly, if you play a foreign lottery through the mail, or over the phone, or by e-mail, you are violating federal law.**

If the postmark on the envelope is from Canada, You may forward the letter and its' contents to the following organization that was created in Canada to help assist the Canadian Proventol Police in dealing with these con artists. You may also contact them toll free at (888)495-8501.

"Project Phonebusters"
Box 686
North Bay, Ontario
P1B8J8

If the postmark originates from anywhere else, give it to your local postmaster.

If you receive any other questionable material that you believe might be a scam, please contact Stacie Harris at the District Attorney's Office at 583-6030 and/or the Attorney General's Office Consumer Hotline at (800)222-4444