

Bail Scam

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On October 2, 2015 Plattsburgh City Police Detectives began a bail scam investigation after receiving a report from the Plattsburgh FedEx office concerning a 74 year old Texas woman who was the apparent victim. Investigation showed the woman received a phone call from an as yet unknown person posing as an attorney stating that her grandson had been arrested for DWI and incarcerated in the county jail and cash was needed to bail him out. The caller instructed the woman to place \$21,000 between the pages of a magazine then ship via FedEx overnight delivery to 334 Cornelia St. 334 Cornelia St is a commercial mail drop store named Plattsburgh Mail Boxes . After sending the package the woman became suspicious, feeling she may have been scammed, and called the Plattsburgh FedEx office to stop delivery. Fortunately FedEx was able to intercept the package prior to delivery and turned it over to City Police Detectives. On November 25, 2015 Plattsburgh City Police Detectives received a call from a man in Colorado reporting his mother, located in Carson City NV, sent \$9,000 via UPS to Plattsburgh Mail Boxes to bail him out of jail. Using a tracking number provided by the Colorado man detectives learned that the package had been delivered to Plattsburgh Mail Boxes within the last 15 minutes. Detectives responded immediately and recovered the package. Follow up investigation showed the Carson City woman had been instructed to send \$9,000 cash to bail her son out of jail. She was also instructed to place the money between different pages of a magazine. While at Plattsburgh Mail Boxes investigating the Colorado / Carson City complaint, detectives discovered another suspicious package waiting to be picked up. Detectives set up surveillance and waited. Several hours later a Burlington Vt. man arrived and took delivery of the package. Detectives stopped the man and determined he is the owner of a legitimate delivery business. He had been hired by another person to come to Plattsburgh to pick up the package then deliver it to a Burlington VT hotel. Investigation showed this package contained \$8,000 cash and the sender received the same phone call (relative in jail, send cash for bail money) with the same packaging instructions (stick cash between pages of a magazine). Total money returned to victims is \$38,000. Several leads have been identified, investigation continues. **How To Protect Yourself**

The following are tips from the Federal Trade Commission

Know who you re dealing with.

Try to find a seller s physical address (not a P.O. Box) and phone number. With internet phone services and other web-based technologies, it s tough to tell where someone is calling from. Do an online search for the company name and website, and look for reviews. If people report negative experiences, you ll have to decide if the offer is worth the risk. After all, a deal is good only if you get a product that actually works as promised.

Know that wiring money is like sending cash.

Con artists often insist that people wire money, especially overseas, because it s nearly impossible to reverse the transaction or trace the money. Don t wire money to strangers, to sellers who insist on wire transfers for payment, or to anyone who claims to be a relative or friend in an emergency and wants to keep the request a secret.

Read your monthly statements.

Scammers steal account information and then run up charges or commit crimes in your name. Dishonest merchants bill you for monthly membership fees and other goods or services without your authorization. If you see charges you don t recognize or didn t okay, contact your bank, card issuer, or other creditor immediately.

After a disaster, give only to established charities.

In the aftermath of a disaster, give to an established charity, rather than one that has sprung up overnight. Pop-up charities probably don't have the infrastructure to get help to the affected areas or people, and they could be collecting the money to finance illegal activity. For more donating tips, check out www.ftc.gov/charityfraud.

Talk to your doctor before you buy health products or treatments. Ask about research that supports a product's claims and possible risks or side effects. In addition, buy prescription drugs only from licensed U.S. pharmacies. Otherwise, you could end up with products that are fake, expired, or mislabeled—in short, products that could be dangerous to your health.

Remember there's no sure thing in investing.

If someone contacts you with low-risk, high-return investment opportunities, stay away. When you hear pitches that insist you act now, that guarantee big profits, that promise little or no financial risk, or that demand that you send cash immediately, report them at ftc.gov.

What Not To Do Don't send money to someone you don't know.

Not to an online seller you've never heard of or an online love interest who asks for money. It's best to do business with sites you know and trust. If you buy items through an online auction, consider using a payment option that provides protection, like a credit card.

If you think you've found a good deal, but you aren't familiar with the company, check it out. Type the company or product name into your favorite search engine with terms like review, complaint, or scam. See what comes up on the first page of results as well as on the later pages.

Never pay fees first for the promise of a big pay-off later—whether it's for a loan, a job, a grant or a so-called prize.

Don't agree to deposit a check and wire money back.

By law, banks have to make funds from deposited checks available within days, but uncovering a fake check can take weeks. You're responsible for the checks you deposit: If a check turns out to be a fake, you're responsible for paying back the bank. No matter how convincing the story, someone who overpays with a check is almost certainly a scam artist.

Don't reply to messages asking for personal or financial information.

It doesn't matter whether the message comes as an email, a phone call, a text message, or an ad. Don't click on links or call phone numbers included in the message, either. It's called phishing. The crooks behind these messages are trying to trick you into revealing sensitive information. If you got a message like this and you are concerned about your account status, call the number on your credit or debit card or your statement and check on it.

Don't play a foreign lottery. It's illegal to play a foreign lottery. And yet messages that tout your chances of winning a foreign lottery, or messages that claim you've already won, can be tempting. Inevitably, you have to pay taxes, fees, or customs duties to collect your prize. If you must send money to collect, you haven't won anything. And if you send any money, you will lose it. You won't get any money back, either, regardless of promises or guarantees.

If You Think You've Been Scammed

" File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. If you are outside the U.S., file a complaint at econsumer.gov.

" Visit ftc.gov/idtheft, where you'll find out how to minimize your risk of identity theft.

" Report scams to your state Attorney General.

If you get unsolicited email offers or spam, send the messages to spam@uce.gov.

If you get what looks like lottery material from a foreign country through the postal mail, take it to your local postmaster.

* Federal Trade Commission (<http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0060-10-ways-avoid-fraud>)