

FRAUD ALERT!

Top Scams of 2010

The National Consumer League (NCL) has released its annual report on top scams reported to its national Fraud Center. Most notably in 2010 was a growing trend of older consumers being targeted hard by con artists, with this age category disproportionately falling victim to sweepstakes scams.

This trend of older adults being increasingly targeted by scam artists is evident in the numbers of complaints received by the NCL Fraud Center. Consumers above the age of 65 made up the biggest increase in complaints this year, up 5.59 percent. Consumers over the age of 55 made up nearly a third of all complaints (32.38 percent). Baby Boomers and older consumers made up a total of 54.01 percent of complaints to NCL'S Fraud Center in 2010.

A particularly noteworthy trend for 2010 that was also mentioned in last month's Fraud Alert, is that scam artists are using variations on the so called "**Grandparent Scam.**" According the NCL's Fraud Center, a number of complaints were received regarding attempted and successful frauds of this type being perpetrated. Although the Grandparent Scams have not yet made an appearance on the Top Ten list of scams, the fact that con artists are targeting older consumers is consistent with other trends that the NCL Fraud Center has noticed recently. And many scams rely on money being wired, as does the Grandparent Scam. Consumers should be wary of any offer or request that requires wiring money. Wiring money is an extremely *unsafe* way for consumers to pay for transactions, thus making wire transfers the go to payment method of choice for scammers. 41.57% of consumers who reported losses to the NCL Fraud Center noted that they sent money via wire transfer.

Fake Check Scams continued to be the most frequent type of complaint to NCL in 2010, accounting for nearly a third of all reports. "Fake check scams have been going strong since we first started hearing about them years ago. There are so many variations....but whatever the pitch, they all have one thing in common: there is *no* legitimate reason for someone to give you money and ask you to wire money back," says John Breyault, NCL Vice President of Public Policy, Telecommunications and Fraud.

2010 Overall Top Ten Scams:

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| 1. Fake Check Scams | 6. Timeshare Resales |
| 2. Internet: General Merchandise | 7. Nigerian Money Offers (not prizes) |
| 3. Prizes/Sweepstakes/Free Gifts | 8. Internet: Auctions |
| 4. Phishing/Spoofing | 9. Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles |
| 5. Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers | 10. Scholarships/Grants |

The Fraud Center's Web site, www.fraud.org, is a consumer resource of most common telemarketing and Internet scams. Consumers can report suspected fraud using the online complain form. You may also contact a member of the Crimes Against Older Adults Task Force for information or guidance.

BUCKS COUNTY CRIMES AGAINST OLDER ADULTS TASK FORCE

Bucks County District Attorney's Office

215-348-6344

Bucks County Area Agency on Aging

215-348-0510

Bucks County Coroner's Office

215-348-3852

Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA)

1-800-675-6900

A Woman's Place (AWP)

1-800-220-8116

Bucks County Office of Consumer Protection

215-348-6060

Bucks County Register of Wills

215-348-6265

US Dept. of Health and Human Services

Investigations, Office of the Inspector General

www.crimesagainstolderadultsbucks.org

24 - HOUR HOTLINE: 1-800-490-8505