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For release upon receipt
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EPIC Alert: ‘Check in the mail’ scam, ‘Paramedic Con’ hits the Northland

LIBERTY – Two scams are targeting area elderly warns Clay County Prosecuting Attorney

Daniel White.

The first is one of the great lies with a twist: A check actually **is** in the mail.

The second is an “insidious, twisted scheme” in which callers pretending to be healthcare professionals try to pry personal and financial information from their would-be targets.

“We’ve had folks tell us they’ve gotten checks in the mail along with a letter or phone call claiming a bunch of money is waiting for them. Usually the letter is hand-addressed and stamped, and in most instances mailed from Canada,” says White.

“The letters urge recipients to quietly deposit the enclosed check and either send a check or send cash in an equal amount. These checks are issued purportedly to pay taxes although there’s never an explanation as to why total strangers would want to pay taxes.”

What happens if the would-be victim follows these instructions?

“We’ve had one older gentleman come forward who has lost over \$9,000 because of this scam. He got a check for \$4,750 and a follow up telephone call in which he was instructed to deposit the check and send the proceeds to a third party in the south. A few days he got a second check and a similar phone call followed. A few days later his bank advised him that both checks had bounced and he’s out the money,” said White.

Authorities have been notified said the prosecutor. “I want to find these guys and charge them. Under the provisions of financial exploitation of the elderly, we can charge higher grades of felony and expose defendants to a very lengthy prison term.”

In the second instance a woman reports getting a “disturbing” call.

“The caller was from out-of-state and said he was a paramedic and was calling senior citizens to get them to provide information so that in case of an emergency, the hospital and the paramedics could have this information at their fingertips.

“He asked her name, and then he asked for her VISA card. She declined so he asked for her banking information. When she asked why paramedics would need banking information, he became angry and she terminated the call,” said White.

“Later someone called from the same telephone number, which is 877-977-2273,” said White. “This time, it was another caller who said the would-be victim needed to provide personal and banking information for a ‘healthcare card.’”

No one answers the phone; calls now roll over to voice mail, said White.

White says healthcare professionals don’t need nor want your credit card or banking information. “They’re there to take care of you in times of an emergency,” added the prosecutor.

“If someone calls you out of the blue and wants you to either give them money or banking and credit card information, it’s a scam. Period,” said White. “Never provide personal information to someone who calls you no matter who they say they are. These crooks will pretend to be anyone from the Publisher’s Clearinghouse to FBI agents to paramedics.

“Legitimate corporations, enterprises and agencies understand your privacy rights and won’t demand money or personal information from you,” added the prosecutor.

Conmen are skilled at sounding trustworthy, warns White. He advises those who receive such “cold calls” to:

- NEVER provide personal information. That includes social security numbers, dates of birth, mother's maiden name, children's names and birth dates or any other information which can be used to uniquely identify you or your family members.
- NEVER provide banking, credit card, loan account numbers or any other financial information to someone who calls claiming to be from a bank, credit card company or any other institution. "Your bank knows you and knows your account information. If someone calls and immediately asks for your account information, it's a scammer. Hang up and call the bank directly," said White.
- NOT BE intimidated by conmen. "These people are typically off shore or in Canada so frankly, you are in control. They can't make you give information over the telephone so hang up. Don't take verbal abuse. Just hang up when the conman becomes nasty," said White. "And believe me; when you keep them from getting to your life savings, they will become nasty."

White says that if you've received such a call and have already provided personal information, immediately seek a credit history and credit report. "Make sure no one is using your identity. If someone is pretending to be you, notify your bank and credit card companies immediately and also make a police report," said the prosecutor.

White's office provides an informational program on how to avoid being scammed by conmen and schemers. To schedule one for a church, social or community group, contact the EPIC program at (816) 736-8304 or via email to epic@claycopa.com.

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More information, contact Dan White or Jim Roberts at (816) 736-8300

Attached are a modified copy of the check (the target's name and address as well as the address of the firm in New York have been deleted) which an elderly would-be victim received and the letter the conmen sent.

CARL MARKS & CO. LP

16692

DATE 05/03/2006

PAY TO THE ORDER OF

\$ **4,300.00

FOUR-THOUSAND THREE-HUNDRED AND 00/100***** DOLLARS



Roger Duvessin

MEMO



Date: April 04th, 2006
Winning Ticket No. 022568352730
Reference No. 14-7299-RPT-9

Attn: Sir/Ma'am

This is to inform you on behalf of Equinox Payment on your winnings of \$750,000.00 (Seven Hundred & Fifty Thousand US Dollars). Among the 126 participating finalists playing 6,000 full tickets in the fifth series from a pool of \$10,000,000.00 (*Ten Million*) in cash, your ticket number 022568352730 with serial number 698-75 drew the lucky numbers 17-22-38-40-41, which won a cash prize in that category. Your number has been approved for a cash lump sum payout of \$750,000.00 (*Seven Hundred & Fifty Thousand Dollars*) in cash, credited to file number LDR 622123003/05.

Congratulations!

When contacting please refer to *Reference number 14-7299-RPT-9* when confirming your claim. We advise you to keep this award away from public affairs until your claim has been confirmed, and the prize remitted to you. This is part of our security protocol to avoid any double claiming or any unwarranted solicitation by participants. Your funds have been deposited with a security company who is responsible for handling and remittance of prizes and funds until they are accurately disbursed.

Yours Truly,

Betty Evans,
Representative/Agent
Equinox Payment.

Account Opener 477752
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Do not negotiate this item until it has been activated by your agent, please
Contact Mr. John Blake @ 778-322-2851