



NEWS FROM SCDCA

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
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1.800.922.1594 (toll free in SC)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Phishing is #1 Reported Scam at SCDCA

Columbia, SC... In the six months following the launch of the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs' (SCDCA) Identity Theft Unit, more than 700 scam reports have been recorded where fraudsters tried to separate consumers from their personal information and/or money.

Phishing (23%), an electronic attempt to trick a consumer into releasing personal information, came in at number one. **Sweepstakes/Lottery (20%)**, when a scammer notifies a consumer they have won a fake contest or lottery with strings attached, was a close second. **Impostor scams (18%)**, where fraudsters pose as friends, family, and businesses the consumer may frequent, rounded out the top three. One consumer reported losing more than \$10,000 dollars through a grandparent scam. The fraudster called the consumer, posing as her granddaughter, pleading for money to bail her out of a foreign jail. Elderly loved ones are often targeted with this scam.

The information gathered from the reports helps SCDCA to track trends and issue warnings to prevent consumers from becoming victims. The following characteristics are the most common tip offs to a scam:

- **Requests for money.** Fraudsters often ask for money via untraceable means, such as wire transfer and prepaid debit cards. When related to a sweepstake/lottery, legit companies will not request payment in order for consumers to collect a prize.
- **Verification of information.** Cold callers often try to catch consumers off guard in order to gain access to sensitive personal information. Never verify personal and financial information to a stranger. Businesses and government agencies won't try to verify consumer information via phone, e-mail or text message.
- **Beware of scare tactics.** Scammers will usually try to scare a consumer with a time sensitive offer to avoid "jail time" or "litigation." They want the consumer to make a

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rash decision before they're able to think it through. When in doubt, hang up and call the company or person directly.

For information on identity theft or to report a possible scam, please contact SCDCA's Identity Theft Unit by calling 1-800-922-1594 or visiting www.consumer.sc.gov. For more information on phishing and telephone scams, visit SCDCA's website and click "News Releases & Publications" then "SCDCA Spotlight."

(http://www.consumer.sc.gov/Documents/SpotLight/Email_Scams_Phishing.pdf and http://www.consumer.sc.gov/Documents/SpotLight/Telephone_Scams.pdf)

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SCDCA aims to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, complaint mediation, enforcement and education. To file a complaint or get information on consumer issues, visit www.consumer.sc.gov or call toll-free, 1.800.922.1594.

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