Lottery Scam Likely to Spread - An ACCESS Fraud Alert

February 6, 2012 - New York's State Comptroller, Tom DiNapoli is warning consumers not to become victims of a new scam. Targeted victims receive a regular postal mail letter stating that they have won a lottery or sweepstakes. Included with letter is a check that appears to be issued by the State of New York. And that check has apparently been a good enough forgery to fool some banks. Each check has DiNapoli's forged signature on it.

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New York has already recovered twelve checks that were deposited with banks for several thousand dollars each. The letter accompanying the checks asked the victims to wire funds to cover the taxes associated with their supposed winnings.

Once a check is deposited with a bank, it can take a few days for the bank to determine that the check is no good. Any victims who wire funds prior to the time that the bank reverses their deposit will find that they are on the hook for the amount of money that they sent to the scam artists.

According to the Comptroller, each of the letters was sent Guarantee Trust, Inc. or Golden Gateway Financial, Division of Unclaimed Funds. Victims are told that they have won the "American Lottery Sweepstakes Millions", which is supposedly a drawing. They are further told that they have been asked by the state to track down winners who have not claimed their funds.

While the idea of receiving unclaimed money from the state government may be very appealing, it is also a great way for scam artists to dupe unsuspecting consumers. Anyone receiving one of these letters is urged to contact a hotline setup

by the State of New York at 1-888-672-4555.

The barrier to entry for scam artists to try this type of campaign in other areas is very low. Therefore, ACCESS is warning consumers across the country to aware of this scam. If you receive similar notifications from any other state, contact the office of the state agency named in the letter or which appears on the forged state check.

byJim Malmberg
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