

Frauds, scams, cheats: Buyer beware

Written by By Kimberly Gaona Sun Correspondent
Friday, 10 April 2015 00:00



Fake \$100 bill circulated at flea mart

The McKinley County Sheriff's Office is warning the public to be aware of the growing rate of fraudulent activity after two deputies became the latest targets of a scam. Lieutenant James Maiorano said that two separate deputies had received checks made out to them for well over \$1,000. They immediately brought them into the department and started investigating.

Maiorano said that they contacted the banks and were told that the account numbers were correct, but that the company that had sent the checks had gone out of business.

"All that comes in the envelope is a check with your name on it, no instructions," he said.

It is unclear how the con works unless the payee was to deposit the check into their personal account, where it would most likely bounce, causing financial hardship.

"These businesses have no idea how they got a hold of their checks, it's quite the scam," he

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said. "I don't know how they make money."

Maiorano recommends that anyone who receives an unexpected check from an unknown company should contact local law enforcement before depositing it.

Another scam is taking place over the popular community-monitored site Craigslist, according to Maiorano. He said that the buyer sends a check for more than the purchase price and when they are contacted about it, they are told that it was a mistake.

"They tell them to just cash the check and send us the remaining balance," he said.

He explained that several more scams involve phone calls, with some scammers identifying themselves as law enforcement officials and others as missionaries.

All of the cases have been turned over to the New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas' office for further investigation.

Counterfeit money is also a common scam. The latest \$100 bill that was turned in to the McKinley County Sheriff's Office was first passed around at the Yahtahey flea market, Maiorano said.

Gallup Police Department spokesman Capt. Rick White said that car burglaries are one way that criminals are able to get a hold of an unsuspecting person's information. People should use care when leaving their vehicles, making sure that personal items and information are not left in plain view.

"They can open accounts, clear out your accounts," he said. "We do have several people in jail right now [for that]."

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White also warned about a mystery shopper scam that asks for consumers to test Western Union. Also, a lottery win in which you have to pay the taxes in advance is likely a scam.

“If you have to pay, if you didn’t enter to win anything, it’s bogus,” he said. “They develop new scams daily, usually from foreign countries that you can’t trace back to.”