



# Fraud Newsletter

August 2008

*Sheriff Steve Mansfield*

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*"If it's too good to be true  
it normally is"*

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## **Fraud and ID Theft Information – To Better Protect the Residents of Lewis County**

**Fraud is simply a theft by trick. It can take the form of chain letters claiming huge amounts of cash to those who send money in or people claiming they will provide a service and never do.**

**Identity theft and identity fraud are terms used to refer to all types of crimes in which someone wrongfully obtains and uses another person's personal data in a way that involves fraud or deception for economic gain. This newsletter is intended to keep the public informed of the most recent fraud schemes happening in our county. It will also provide resources to help you take precautions to protect yourself from these vicious crimes.**

### **PROTECT YOUR ID**

- 1** Always know who you are providing personal information to
- 2** If you use passwords to access accounts make sure to change them often
- 3** Never provide personal information in response to any unsolicited offer
- 4** Know the company you are dealing with when making online purchases

## **Current Scams and Frauds Hitting Lewis County**

### **Lottery Prize Scams**

**Again, our community has been hit by this old scam. It starts off with unsolicited mail or phone calls from companies claiming to be holding a large lottery prize for you. The pitch is their claim that you have won a cash prize in an international lottery. If the contact was by mail it will often include a bank check for a portion of the alleged winnings. The instructions tell you to deposit the check and return a portion for payment of local taxes. It will give you all of the information to return the payment by way of a MoneyGram or by Western Union money transfer to a person in Canada. The check will be drawn on the account of a company in the US. The check is a forgery and it's all a scam to steal your money. The fraud continues to target the elderly in our community as they are less likely to report their loss due to embarrassment.**

### Alerts from the Washington State Attorney General

#### Recent Consumer Alerts

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*"Internet fraud is the fastest growing crime in the US"*

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#### Scam Alert: ID thief poses as debt repairer

KENT -- A Kent woman received a call from someone claiming to help her repair her debt. The consumer became suspicious when the caller asked for personal information - including her phone number and the security code on the back of her credit card.

#### Consumer Alert: "Grandparent scam" targets Washington elderly again

RICHLAND - If your grandchild called seeking help, would you send money? The Washington Attorney General's Office is warning Washington residents about the "grandparent scam," where cons posing as relatives try to convince elderly victims to wire cash to help pay for emergency car repairs, medical bills - or even post bail.

#### DFI Consumer Alert: Advance Fee Scam Alert - Broadway Lending Group

OLYMPIA -- Consumers are finding Broadway Lending Group's website and are contacting them regarding obtaining a loan. The company requires the consumer to pay a certain number of monthly payments in advance of receiving loan proceeds. This appears to be an advance fee scam.

#### Seattle City Light Alert: BILL COLLECTION SCAM ARTISTS BACK AT WORK

SEATTLE -- Seattle City Light is urging its customers to be on guard against telephone con artists posing as utility bill collectors who appear to be targeting customers with Asian surnames.

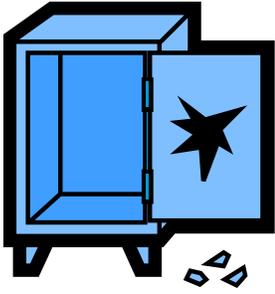
#### DOL Consumer Alert: Telephone car tab renewal scam

OLYMPIA -- The Department of Licensing says watch out for a new scam targeting Washington car owners. Cons posing as DOL representatives are contacting people and telling them their vehicle tabs are expired. They then ask for credit card information to renew the tabs over the phone.

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*"Vigilance is the only real protection against Internet fraud"*

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### Avoiding Internet Auction Fraud

- Understand as much as possible about how the auction works, what your obligations are as a buyer, and what the seller's obligations are before you bid.
- Find out what actions the website/company takes if a problem occurs and consider insuring the transaction and shipment.
- Learn as much as possible about the seller, especially if the only information you have is an e-mail address. If it is a business, check the Better Business Bureau where the seller/business is located.
- Examine the feedback on the seller.
- Determine what method of payment the seller is asking from the buyer and where he/she is asking to send payment.
- If a problem occurs with the auction transaction, it could be much more difficult if the seller is located outside the U.S. because of the difference in laws.
- Ask the seller about when delivery can be expected and if there is a problem with the merchandise is it covered by a warranty or can you exchange it.
- Find out if shipping and delivery charges are included in the auction price or are additional costs so there are no unexpected costs.
- There should be no reason to give out your social security number or driver's license number to the seller.

#### Other Resources

Phone Busters (Canadian Link) - <http://www.phonebusters.com/>

The Federal Citizen Information Center - <http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/scamsdesc.htm>

The Federal Trade Commission - <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>

The FBI Fraud Information page - <http://www.fbi.gov/majcases/fraud/fraudschemes.htm>

The Internet Crime Complaint Center - <http://www.ic3.gov/>

**Lewis County Sheriff's Office**  
**360-748-9286**

#### Lewis County Sheriff's Office Mission Statement

To make a positive difference for members of our community by seeking and finding ways to affirmatively promote, preserve and deliver a feeling of security, safety and quality service.



*Sheriff Steven Mansfield  
Committed to make a difference.*