Beware of Wire Fraud Scams

Five Tips for Consumers:

1. Be skeptical whenever you are told you’ve won a contest or the lottery you did not enter. In Lottery or Contest Scams, consumers are told they have won large sums of money but must first wire fees or taxes to claim their winnings. Fraudsters often send victims a fake check with instructions to cash the check and then wire a portion of the cash back to the fraudster as a fee.

2. Be skeptical whenever a purported friend or family member asks for an emergency wire transfer but urges you not to tell anyone else about the emergency. In Grandparent and Romance Scams, consumers are contacted by fraudsters posing as a friend, family member, or love interest claiming to be in trouble and in need of an emergency wire transfer. Common scenarios include medical emergencies, car accidents, and muggings.

3. Be aware that legitimate businesses will NEVER ask you to wire money. In Phantom Debt Scams, fraudsters posing as law firms, debt collectors, or the government contact consumers and threaten a lawsuit or even arrest over fake debt unless the consumer immediately wires money they do not in fact owe.

4. Be aware that the government will NEVER ask you to wire money for any purpose. In Government Relief Scams, fraudsters pose as the government and tell victims they are eligible for a government payout or restitution, but must first wire fees or taxes to receive their money.

5. Be skeptical whenever an unknown source requests a money transfer. Ultimately, there are an infinite number of scenarios fraudsters may dream up to trick victims. Other common scams include mystery shopper offers, rental property offers, and get-rich-quick employment offers. These scams almost always require an up-front wire transfer of fees or taxes to take advantage of a too-good-to-be-true benefit.

Attorney General Becerra strongly encourages consumers to ignore such scams and report them to the Office’s Public Inquiry Unit by calling (800) 952-5225 or submitting a complaint at: http://oag.ca.gov/contact/consumer-complaint-against-business-or-company