

Fraud Alert!

July 8, 2005

IF IT LOOKS REAL, IS IT?

IN THIS DAY OF SOPHISTICATED COMPUTERS AND INEXPENSIVE SOFTWARE PROGRAMS, IT IS INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE WHAT IS REAL AND WHAT IS FAKE BASED SOLELY ON APPEARANCE. **WE ARE CONSTANTLY FINDING PHONY WEBSITES ON THE INTERNET THAT LOOK LIKE THE REAL WEBSITES OF BANKS, CREDIT CARD COMPANIES, AND BUSINESSES. TWO PEOPLE HAVE CONTACTED OUR OFFICE IN THE LAST MONTH REPORTING THAT THEY HAD RECEIVED CASHIER'S CHECKS FOR SEVERAL THOUSAND DOLLARS. THE CHECKS LOOK LIKE THE REAL THING, BUT THEY ARE PHONY AND ARE PART OF A LOTTERY SCAM. DRIVER'S LICENSES AND IDENTITY CARDS CAN BE REPRODUCED ON HOME COMPUTERS, AS CAN PAYROLL AND OTHER COMMERCIAL CHECKS. CRIMINALS CAN PURCHASE OR STEAL UNIFORMS THAT GIVE THEM THE APPEARANCE OF BEING SERVICE PERSONNEL OF MAJOR COMPANIES. SO WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF?**

YOU MIGHT FOLLOW RONALD REGAN'S ADVICE: "TRUST, BUT VERIFY!" HE WASN'T REFERRING TO FRAUD PREVENTION, BUT THE ADVICE IS STILL APPROPRIATE. NEVER TAKE ANYTHING AT FACE VALUE. BEFORE YOU DEPOSIT THAT CHECK (EVEN A CASHIER'S CHECK) THAT ARRIVED OUT OF THE BLUE, HAVE THE BANK VERIFY THAT IT IS LEGITIMATE. BEFORE YOU ALLOW THAT "SERVICE PERSON" IN YOUR HOME, ASK FOR HIS/HER I.D., AND THEN CALL THE SERVICE COMPANY FOR VERIFICATION. AND IF ANYONE CONTACTS YOU, **NO MATTER WHO THEY CLAIM TO BE, DO NOT GIVE ANY PERSONAL INFORMATION TO THAT PERSON. ONLY GIVE INFORMATION TO SOMEONE THAT YOU HAVE CALLED, USING A NUMBER OR ADDRESS THAT YOU HAVE LOOKED UP, AND THAT YOU KNOW TO BE LEGITIMATE.**

Need help?

Call the CASE Assistance Line

720-874.8547

