

Mass Marketing Fraud

A Basic Overview

Mass Marketing Frauds target individuals of all ages and walks of life. Victims are lured with false promises of significant cash prizes, goods, services or good works, in exchange for up-front fees, taxes or donations.



Costs of Fraud

Mass Marketing Frauds victimize millions of Americans each year and generate losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars.



The Top Schemes

- Foreign Lotteries & Sweepstakes
- Nigerian Letter Scams
- Credit & Loan Scams
- Overpayment Scams
- Charity Scams



Common Scams

Be on the Lookout for Fraud

Foreign Lotteries & Sweepstakes

- Foreign lottery fraud is currently one of the most prevalent consumer frauds.
- Victims are told that they have won a lottery or sweepstakes in a foreign drawing.
- To collect the winnings, victims are told they must first pay various taxes and fees.

Nigerian Letter Scams

- Victims are asked to help illegally transfer funds out of Nigeria in return for a share of the money.
- Perpetrators ask victims for their bank account information under the pretext that it is needed to complete the transaction.
- Victims may also be asked to pay money up-front to help defray the cost of taxes, legal fees or bribes.

Credit & Loan Scams

- Victims with poor or non-existent credit are offered credit cards/loans—for an advance fee.
- “Credit repair services” may offer to help those with poor credit improve their credit ratings—for an advance fee.

Overpayment Scams

- The victim is advertising an item for sale.
- A “buyer” sends the seller a counterfeit check or money order for more than the cost of the item.
- The victim is asked to return the difference between the payment and the cost of the item.
- When the payment turns out to be counterfeit, the victim is held responsible by his or her financial institution.

Charity Scams

- Con artists solicit donations in the name of non-existent or fraudulent charities.
- Most charity scams occur during the holidays or in the aftermath of disasters, when philanthropy is most common.

Protect Yourself

How You Can Avoid Becoming a Victim

The Hallmarks of Mass Marketing Fraud

- Offers appear “too good to be true.”
- Payments for goods or services are required in advance.
- Personal information is requested over the telephone.
- Offers are unsolicited.
- Representatives use high pressure sales techniques, claiming that immediate action is required.

What You Can Do

- Don’t believe everything you are told. If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Avoid being taken by high pressure sales. Take the time to research offers before deciding whether or not to participate.
- Don’t do business with anyone who solicits your money in advance of awarding a prize.
- Inspect all representatives’ credentials carefully.
- Get all offers in writing and keep a copy for your records.
- Don’t deposit checks sent by companies that claim the check is being sent to pay fees or taxes on lottery winnings.

Report Scams When They Occur

- Don’t ever be embarrassed. These frauds are perpetrated by sophisticated con artists.
- File a claim with the appropriate entities listed in this brochure.
- Report the crime promptly—you’ll have a better chance of getting your money back and bringing the perpetrators to justice when you file a complaint soon after the crime.



Reporting Resources



FBI Field Office Contact Information

U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

www.ftc.gov

(877) FTC-HELP; (877) 382-4357

Victims are strongly encouraged to report frauds to the FTC, which maintains a comprehensive scam database called Consumer Sentinel.

PhoneBusters

Tel: (888) 495-8501; Fax: (888) 654-9426

For frauds related to Canada, victims should contact PhoneBusters, a Canadian government clearinghouse for fraud information.

Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3)

www.ic3.gov

For internet-based scams, individuals are encouraged to report incidents directly to IC3.

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)

www.aarp.org

For information related to fraud schemes targeting senior citizens, individuals should take advantage of the resources available on the AARP website.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

(877) 829-5500

www.irs.gov

To avoid charity frauds, individuals should research organizations on the IRS website.

Better Business Bureau, Wise Giving Alliance

(703) 276-0100

www.give.org

The Wise Giving Alliance provides information on charities that have been the subject of donor inquiries and also offers tips about charitable giving.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

www.fbi.gov

Individuals are always encouraged to report Mass Marketing Frauds to their local FBI offices, all of which are listed on the back of this brochure.

OFFICE	PHONE #	OFFICE	PHONE #
Albany, NY	518-465-7551	Memphis, TN	901-747-4300
Albuquerque, NM	505-889-1300	Miami, FL	305-944-9101
Anchorage, AK	907-276-4441	Milwaukee, WI	414-276-4684
Atlanta, GA	404-679-9000	Minneapolis, MN	612-376-3200
Baltimore, MD	410-265-8080	Mobile, AL	251-438-3674
Birmingham, AL	205-326-6166	Newark, NJ	973-792-3000
Boston, MA	617-742-5533	New Haven, CT	203-777-6311
Buffalo, NY	716-856-7800	New Orleans, LA	504-816-3000
Charlotte, NC	704-377-9200	New York, NY	212-384-1000
Chicago, IL	312-421-6700	Norfolk, VA	757-455-0100
Cincinnati, OH	513-421-4310	Oklahoma City, OK	405-290-7770
Cleveland, OK	216-522-1400	Omaha, NE	402-493-8688
Columbia, SC	803-551-4200	Philadelphia, PA	215-418-4000
Dallas, TX	972-559-5000	Phoenix, AZ	602-279-5511
Denver, CO	303-629-7171	Pittsburgh, PA	412-432-4000
Detroit, MI	313-965-2323	Portland, OR	503-224-4181
El Paso, TX	915-832-5000	Richmond, VA	804-261-1044
Honolulu, HI	808-566-4300	Sacramento, CA	916-481-9110
Houston, TX	713-693-5000	Salt Lake City, UT	801-579-1400
Indianapolis, IN	317-639-3301	San Antonio, TX	210-225-6741
Jackson, MS	601-948-5000	San Diego, CA	858-565-1255
Jacksonville, FL	904-721-1211	San Francisco, CA	415-553-7400
Kansas City, MO	816-512-8200	San Juan, PR	787-754-6000
Knoxville, TN	865-544-0751	Seattle, WA	206-622-0460
Las Vegas, NV	702-385-1281	Springfield, IL	217-522-9675
Little Rock, AR	501-221-9100	St. Louis, MO	314-589-2500
Los Angeles, CA	310-477-6565	Tampa, FL	813-253-1000
Louisville, KY	502-583-3941	Washington, DC	202-278-2000



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Awareness & Prevention Tips

