



Fake Check Scams

Don't be the victim of a check scam. The scenario seems harmless, but you could be scammed out of thousands of dollars. Someone sends you a check or money order. They ask you to deposit it to your account and then wire-transfer them the money – minus a nice bonus for you, a "thank you" for helping out.

How Does the Check Scam Work?

The "pitch" stays pretty much the same, but it may appear in various disguises:

- You're overpaid for an item you sold on the Internet and asked to wire-transfer back the extra dollars.
- You receive a check and notification that you've won a foreign lottery or sweepstakes. You're told to deposit the check, representing a portion of your winnings, and wire-transfer money back "to cover the taxes" so you can collect the rest of your winnings.
- A work-at-home offer promises that, in return for depositing a money order or check to your bank account, you can keep a percentage of the money after wire-transferring the rest.
- Someone in a chatroom asks you for a favor: Just cash their check and wire-transfer them the money.

Regardless of the pitch, the result is the same – the check or money order you receive for deposit will be counterfeit. It will be returned to your bank unpaid, and the full amount will be deducted from your account.

Who is Responsible for Losses to Your Account?

You are responsible for any check or money order you deposit to your account. If it turns out to be counterfeit, or is returned unpaid for any reason, you are fully responsible for the loss.

Why Did the Bank Allow You to Withdraw the Money?

Federal law requires banks to make deposited funds available within 2 to 7 business days. Just because you can withdraw cash from your account shortly after depositing a check or money order doesn't mean the item you deposited is valid. It can be weeks before a check or money order is discovered to be counterfeit and returned to your bank unpaid.

To learn more about common fake check scams or if you feel you have been a victim of a check scam, visit www.fakechecks.org.