

Fraud Schemes: Common Schemes and Tactics...

And ways to protect yourself



**UNITED STATES
POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE**

Angie Kremer & Ben Schild, U.S. Postal Inspectors

What is the U.S. Postal Inspection Service?



- **Federal law enforcement arm of the U.S. Postal Service (founded by Benjamin Franklin)**
- **Have authority to make arrests and carry firearms**
- **Support and protect USPS, its employees, infrastructure and customers; enforce the laws that defend the nation's mail system from illegal or dangerous use; and ensure public trust in the mail.**
- **Investigate mail fraud, mail theft, crimes against postal employees/postal service, prohibited mail (narcotics etc), child exploitation.**



What is Mail Fraud?



- Any **fraudulent** scheme to **intentionally** deprive another of property or honest services via **mail** communication. It has been a federal crime in the United States since 1872 (18 USC 1341)
- The **use of the U.S. Mail to further the scheme** is what makes it mail fraud.
- Consumer vs. Business vs. Government
- Fine and/or imprisonment up to 20 years
- Examples: foreign lottery scams, investment fraud, charity fraud, sweetheart swindle, etc.
- Everyone is a potential target. Fraud isn't limited to gender, age, education, or income.

How does it begin?



And why can't the Postal Service do anything to stop these mailed solicitations?

The Pitch:

Every scam has some type of pitch-
the “too good to be true” part that reels you in!

- **Sweepstakes/ Lotteries**
- **Grandparent Schemes**
- **Romance Schemes**
- **IRS Tax Schemes**
- **Law Enforcement Agency/
Crime Victim Scheme**

Sweepstakes/ Lotteries:

You've won!

...but we need you to pay off the taxes before
you can claim your prize!

Oh, and don't tell anyone about this-
It's important to keep your winnings confidential!

*Congrats!
You Won!*



IRS Tax Schemes/ Arrest Warrant Schemes:

“Sir, I am calling to advise you that you are delinquent in your tax payments. You will need to send payment immediately or I will come arrest you.”

If you make payment now, we will cancel your arrest warrant!



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Grandparent Schemes:

“Hi Grandma...I’m in trouble and I need your help! But please, don’t tell my Mom about this!”



Little Tommy has been arrested. You need to send us his bail money NOW!




Romance Schemes:

“I would love to come visit you and start our life together, I just need a few dollars to help with my travel arrangements!”

Photo stolen from online profile



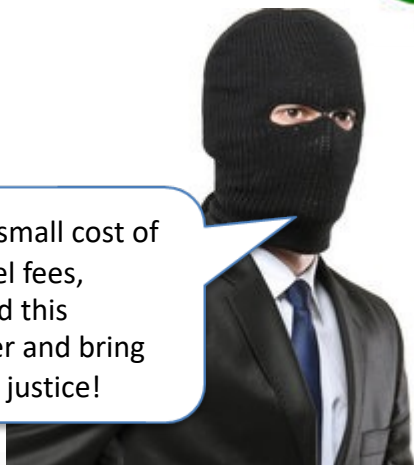
Victim: *“This is the thing I had the most trouble with. I had his pictures in my house for a year. I talked to this guy for so long. Even when I was told it was scam, my feelings didn’t change. They didn’t go away. Nobody understands that. They’ve brainwashed you.”*



Trust me,
Love me,
Help me,
PAY ME!

Law Enforcement/ Victim Advocacy Schemes:

“Hello, I am an agent with the FBI. I understand you have been tricked into sending money to a scammer. For a small fee, I’d be happy to open an investigation for you and try to retrieve your lost money.”



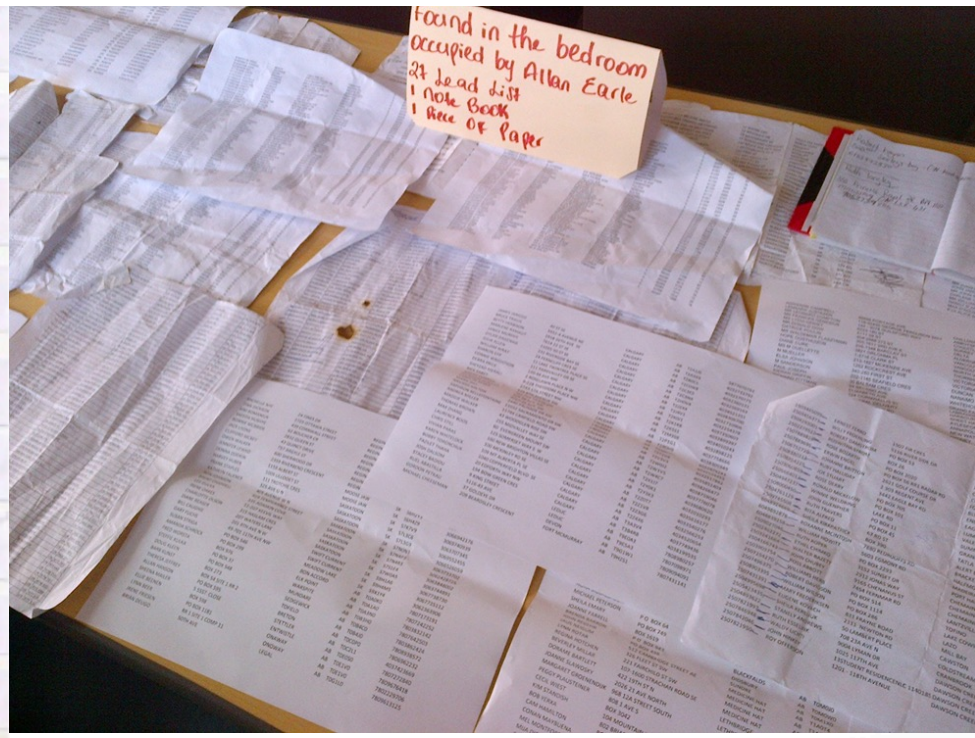
For the small cost of my travel fees, I will find this scammer and bring them to justice!



LEAD LISTS

Once a scammer identifies you as a person who answers their phone or sends money, they add your name to a Lead List.

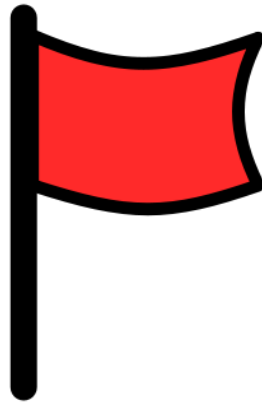
These lists sell for thousands of dollars across scammer networks...
in some countries, scammers will even kill for these lists.



\$1.3 MILLION SEIZED FROM LEAD LIST BROKER

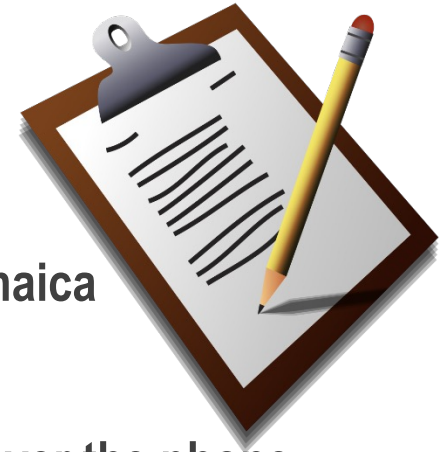


Red Flags



- You **never entered** a lottery or sweepstakes.
- You are asked to **send a fee** to collect your prize – no legitimate sweepstakes requires a fee or taxes up front.
- Asked to purchase **gift cards** and send photos of the numbers/PINs
- Asked to **wire money** via Western Union or MoneyGram
- Gives instructions on **digital currency** deposits (BitCoin)
- Callers have foreign **accents**
- **Pressure** to make a decision quickly
- Attempt to **isolate** you from your family

Prevention Tips



- Screen phone calls via caller ID – 876 area code is Jamaica
- If you have to pay to play – It's a SCAM!
- Never give SSN, DOB, or other personal information over the phone
- Do not deposit money from unknown individuals into your accounts
- Do not send money to people/addresses/accounts you do not know personally
- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! Discuss with someone you trust
- Look up any questionable businesses or agencies through the Better Business Bureau
- Do not fall for high pressure tactics or threats
- **TRUST YOUR INTUITION and LISTEN TO YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

What to do if you're a victim of fraud...

- Do NOT be ASHAMED!
- Screen calls and hang up immediately when the scammers call if you happen to answer
- Change your phone number and have it unlisted
- Change email and bank accounts; as well as credit cards
- Check your credit report regularly and report any fraudulent activity
- Ensure all accounts are password protected
- Ask family for assistance
- Contact Law Enforcement/ USPIS to share numbers and addresses associated with the fraud



Current Trends



- Protecting the Postal Service and its employees is the core mission of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service; therefore, robbery investigations receive the highest level of response and attention.
- The motives for the crimes have included theft of postal funds, mail, and/or postal property.
- Never send cash through the mail. Use checks or money orders. Ask your bank for “secure” checks that are more difficult to alter.
- Hand outgoing mail to your letter carrier, mail it at the Post Office, or in an official blue USPS collection box on the street- prior to the posted pickup time for that day.
- If you do not receive a check or other valuable mail you’re expecting, contact the issuing person/agency immediately.
- Monitor your bank account and bill pay sites routinely. Notify them immediately if you see any discrepancies or late payment issues.
- Postal Inspectors are committed to safeguarding your mail and personal information.

Questions?

Angie Kremer

U.S. Postal Inspector
Cincinnati Field Office
(513) 684-8036

Amkremer@uspis.gov

Ben Schild

U.S. Postal Inspector
Cincinnati Field Office
513-684-8052

bdschild@uspis.gov

U.S. Postal Inspection Service



<https://www.uspis.gov/tips-prevention/mail-fraud>