



## Contact Us

- Your Local FBI Office
- Overseas Offices
- Submit a Crime Tip
- Report Internet Crime
- More Contacts

06/01/10

## Headline Archives

### MASS MARKETING FRAUD Old Scams, New Wineskins

## Learn About Us

- Quick Facts
- What We Investigate
- Natl. Security Branch
- Information Technology
- Fingerprints & Training
- Laboratory Services
- Reports & Publications
- History
- More About Us



A few decades ago, mass marketing fraud—the kind that exploits mass communication techniques like bulk mail or telemarketing—was relatively low-tech and mostly a regional crime problem targeting victims nearby.

**These days, it's a different story.** Thanks to the Internet, criminals and crime groups can also target victims halfway around the world, blasting out spam e-mails by the millions and setting up phony but realistic websites to lure people in.

## Get Our News

- Press Room
- E-mail Updates
- News Feeds

The FBI and its partners—particularly Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Trade Commission, U.S. Secret Service, and U.S. Postal Inspection Service—have been busting these fraudsters for years. But we realize that public awareness must be part of the solution—an educated consumer can stop these scams by not falling for them in the first place.



## Be Crime Smart

- Wanted by the FBI
- More Protections

## Use Our Resources

- For Law Enforcement
- For Communities
- For Researchers
- More Services

## Visit Our Kids' Page

## Apply for a Job



**Podcast: Inside the FBI**  
A mass marketing fraud victim shares her experiences.

So today, law enforcement agencies in a number of countries—including the U.S.—are making a concerted effort to get the word out about these schemes.

**What do you need to know?** Mass marketing fraud generally tries to trick you into handing over your hard-earned money or personal information for the promise of future prizes, products, or services that never come. The Department of Justice blog and our mass marketing fraud brochure have more details, but here are some current scams making the rounds:

- Individuals outside our country e-mail U.S. law firms for legal work but then overpay their retainer fees via check and ask that the remaining funds be wired back overseas. (The victims discover later that the check is counterfeit.)
- In online rental schemes, scammers forward a counterfeit check to the property owner for more than the amount of the rent and then ask for the difference to be wired back. They also duplicate postings from legitimate online real estate sites and when contacted over e-mail by interested renters, ask the interested party to send money.
- Unsolicited e-mails supposedly from the FBI that ask for money or personal information (ironically, it was the most common complaint made to the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) last year).

### You should also be suspicious if you are:

- Asked for personal financial details like bank account information or credit card numbers over the phone or by e-mail;
- Pressured to buy something or give information without time to think it through;
- Specifically asked to pay by cash, check, money order, or commercial wire service transfer (which are harder for law enforcement to detect);

- Told you've won a foreign lottery or sweepstakes you never entered;
- Asked to help transfer funds out of a foreign country for a share of the money; or
- Given a check or money order for more than the cost of an item you are selling (criminals ask you to wire them the difference, but the bank later tells you the check or money order is counterfeit).

**Today's efforts to raise public awareness in the U.S. are part of a multinational day of action against mass marketing fraud.** Authorities in Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom are also doing their part in their respective countries to inform the public of these scams.

**The bottom line of our message today:** Educate yourself. And if you think you've been targeted, contact the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center, the Federal Trade Commission, or local authorities.

**Resources:**

- Department of Justice blog
- "Inside the FBI" podcast interview with a mass marketing fraud victim
- IC3 mass marketing fraud brochure (pdf)
- More on mass marketing fraud
- Businesses: Beware of Mass Marketing Scams

[Headline Archives home](#)

---

[Accessibility](#) | [eRulemaking](#) | [Freedom of Information Act/Privacy](#) | [Legal Notices](#) | [Legal Policies and Disclaimers](#) | [Links](#)  
[Privacy Policy](#) | [USA.gov](#) | [White House](#)  
FBI.gov is an official site of the U.S. Federal Government, U.S. Department of Justice.