



MONEY WISE

VALUING PEOPLE. VALUING MONEY.
MANAGING IN TOUGH TIMES INITIATIVE



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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

DON'T LET SCAMS SCARE YOU THIS HALLOWEEN

Many people enjoy a little spine-tingling sensation as Halloween draws near, but no one wants to experience the fright of financial fraud. People reported losing \$1.48 billion to fraud in 2018, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

The following are the most common scams in Kentucky this year, according to the Kentucky Attorney General's Office and the Better Business Bureau. Brush up on these bad guys so you don't fall victim.

IRS and Deputy Sheriff Scams

"Imposter scams" topped the FTC list. In Kentucky, scammers often don the guise of a phony Internal Revenue Service (IRS) worker or deputy sheriff, according to the Attorney General's Office. Telephone threats can sound scary, like your number being linked to "criminal activity" or a federal warrant for your arrest. Others impersonate Social Security or Medicare employees, or lawyers. The scammer typically wants you to wire money or pay by gift card – which can't be tracked or reversed.

Tip: Don't ever wire money or send a gift card to a stranger.

Online Purchase Scams

The online purchase scam was the top Kentucky scam reported to the Better Business Bureau. People reported paying for but never receiving the item they purchased. Or, the seller asked for additional money for shipping, or other cash up front. These same tricks are used in advance fee scams and government grant scams.





Tip: Research and verify online businesses before paying. Also, make sure the site is encrypted – look for the “s” in https.

Employment Scams

Working from home may sound like a dream come true. However, it could be a nightmare in fraud. Many of these scams involve an “employer” who sends a check and asks for money to be sent back in return. Or the employer promises to reimburse your costs and fees for doing a service, but never pays. Beware if the company requires up-front money for license, registration, or insurance. Often the phony forms or contracts on these scams appear legit.

Tip: Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Grandparent Scam

This scam often targets seniors. A caller on the phone claims to be the senior’s grandchild and is in distress. The false grandchild has been arrested or stranded and needs money wired immediately. The grandchild stresses urgency and secrecy, not wanting to upset “mom and dad.” Anytime someone wants you to hurry, it’s a sign that taking the time to research may turn up some interesting facts.

Tip: Always check it out before parting with your cash.

The following are more tips for treating yourself to safety instead of tricks this Halloween:

- Don’t believe the caller ID or email address. These can be changed to reflect what the scammer wants you to believe.
- Hang up! Then sign up for the do not call list. Go to donotcall.gov, or call 888-382-1222 from the phone you want to register.
- Don’t pay in advance for something you expect to receive (sweepstakes, loan, grant, etc.).
- Don’t deposit money into your account and then pay it back to someone else. You could lose your money if the check doesn’t clear.
- While there are people you undoubtedly trust, keep in mind that they could have had their identity stolen. Even those who appear to be your friends and family could be scammers in disguise.

Hopefully these tips will keep you from being a victim. Report potential fraud to the Attorney General at 888-432-9257 and the Better Business Bureau at <https://www.bbb.org/scamtracker/us/reportscam>.

References:

BBB Institute for Marketplace Trust. “BBB Scam Tracker.” (Data retrieved Sept. 5, 2019) <https://www.bbb.org/scamtracker/us/>
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