

Lottery scams promise big winnings, then lose your money

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

- *Congratulations! You may receive a certified check for up to \$500,000,000 US CASH! One Lump sum! Tax free! Your odds to WIN are 1-6.*
- *We are pleased to inform you of the result of the Lottery Winners International programs. Your e-mail address attached to ticket number 278541465006-4872 with serial Number 1772-554, drew lucky numbers 5-14-18-23-33-39, which consequently won in the first category. You have therefore been approved for a lump-sum payout of US\$500,000. CONGRATULATIONS!*

These lines are commonly used in lottery scams. Using telephone, direct mail or e-mail, lottery scams promise instant wealth, but result in victims losing money and personal information.

Here's how the scam works

Typical lottery scams begin with an e-mail notifying the target they have won a large sum of money, usually from a lottery outside the United States. Sometimes the e-mail asks the target to keep their winnings a secret due to "security reasons." The e-mail will direct targets to contact a claims agent, who will ask the target to pay a "processing fee" or "transfer charge." In addition to paying money to receive non-existent winnings, the target also gives scammers access to their credit card information.

Other lottery scams, often based in Canada, use telephone and direct mail to entice targets to buy chances in foreign lotteries. Scam operators promise extremely high chances of winning the lottery, often as high as 1-4. Although scammers may use the name of a real foreign lottery, they will pocket the money they receive for tickets and also charge outlandish amounts for "processing fees."

The Federal Trade Commission offers these tips and words of caution for consumers:

- **Playing a foreign lottery violates federal law.**
- **Keep your credit card and bank account numbers to yourself.**
- **Never pay money to collect your "winnings."**
- **Ignore all mail, e-mail and phone solicitations for foreign lottery promotions.**

If you have been solicited to play a foreign lottery or have received false notification of winning a foreign lottery, visit the FTC's website at ftc.gov or call 877.FTC.HELP to file a complaint.

Watertown (Downtown)

120 Factory Street
Watertown, NY 13601
(315) 782-0155

Watertown

1180 E. Commerce Drive
Watertown, NY 13601
(315) 785-5600

Adams

10924 US Route 11
Adams, NY 13605
(315) 232-2990

Gouverneur

145 East Main Street
Gouverneur, NY 13642
(315) 287-0356

Lowville

5801 Number 4 Road
Lowville, NY 13367
(315) 376-7303