

Attorney General Jeff Landry
Louisiana Department of Justice
www.AGJeffLandry.com

ELDER FRAUD PREVENTION



Consumer Protection Hotline:
1-800-351-4889

The seal of the Louisiana Department of Justice is a circular emblem with a scalloped, sunburst-like border. The center features a shield with a scale of justice and a sword, flanked by two figures. The words "DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE" and "STATE OF LOUISIANA" are inscribed around the inner circle, with stars interspersed.

**TO REPORT SUSPECTED FRAUD,
PLEASE CONTACT THE**

**Louisiana Department of Justice
Consumer Protection Section**

**Post Office Box 94005
Baton Rouge, LA 70804**

**Consumer Protection Hotline:
1-800-351-4889**

www.AGJeffLandry.com

A MESSAGE FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL



As your Attorney General, I am committed to ensuring the Louisiana Department of Justice serves all of our State's people - especially the elderly.

Billions of dollars are lost each year to scams; and, unfortunately, many of these victims are our senior citizens.

Research shows that Americans aged 65 and older are the prime targets of scams and receive more mail and telephone solicitations than any other age group.

Our office will vigorously investigate and prosecute those who unlawfully prey on Louisiana's elderly. And we have compiled this booklet to help educate our State's citizens on telemarketing, mortgage, contractor, charity, and other types of frauds commonly perpetrated on senior citizens. I hope this brochure is helpful to you. If you have any questions or would like more information, please visit www.AGJeffLandry.com or call our Consumer Protection Section at 1-800-351-4889.

I am here to serve you and do all that I can to make our State an even better place to live, work, and raise our families.

For Louisiana,
Jeff Landry
Attorney General

INSIDE

Telemarketing Fraud	6
Telemarketing Sales Rule, Louisiana's Do Not Call Program	
Sweepstakes Fraud	8
Foreign Lotteries, Unsolicited Mail	
Fake Check Scams	10
Classified Ads and Auction Posting Scams	
Reloading Scams	12
Sucker Lists, Caller ID Spoofing	
Charity Fraud	14
Before You Donate, Public Safety Group Donations, Professional Solicitors	
Payday Loans	16
Alternatives to Payday Loans	
Contractor Fraud	18
Get It in Writing	

Funerals and Burials	20
The Funeral Rule	
Living Trust Scams	22
Mortgage Fraud	24
Foreclosure Rescue Scams, Home Equity Scams, Abusive Lending Practices, Reverse Mortgages	
Prescription Drugs Scams	27
Identity Theft	28
Protecting Your Identity, Medical Identity Theft	
Door-to-Door Sales	32
FTC’s Cooling Off Rule	
Investment Fraud	34
Preventing Fraud Online	36
Phishing, Spyware	
Reporting Fraud	38

TELEMARKETING FRAUD

Telemarketing fraud costs consumers an estimated \$40 billion dollars each year. It is important to remember that not every telemarketer who calls is legitimate. It is estimated that there are 140,000 telemarketing firms in this country and up to 10% of these may be operating fraudulently.

Everyone is a potential target of a scam or fraud. Fraud is not limited to race, ethnic background, gender, age, education, or income. However, con artists who use the telephone to swindle trusting people out of their money more often target the elderly because the caller assumes that they live alone, have a large nest egg, or may be more polite to strangers.

Telemarketing Sales Rule

The Federal Trade Commission's Telemarketing Sales Rule helps protect from abusive and deceptive telephone sales practices. It prohibits telemarketers from calling before 8:00 AM and after 9:00 PM. In addition - before a purchase, telemarketers must verbally communicate:

- (1) the total cost of the goods they are selling,
- (2) any restrictions on getting or using them, and
- (3) if a sale is final or non-refundable.

Telemarketers must also say it is a sales call, the name of the seller, and what they are selling before they make the sales pitch.

Hang Up on Phone Fraud:

- Never give Social Security number, credit card number, or bank account information over the phone unless you initiated the call.
- Resist high pressure to make an immediate decision.
- Do not send money by courier, overnight delivery, or wire to anyone who insists on immediate payment. Research all offers with Attorney General Jeff Landry's Consumer Protection Section before agreeing to send money.
- Ask the caller to send written information about the product or service being offered.
- Remember: if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!



Did you know?

Louisiana has a Do Not Call Program that can reduce the amount of telemarketing phone calls you receive. To sign up for the program or get more information, call the Louisiana Public Service Commission at 877-676-0773 or visit www.lpsc.louisiana.gov. You can also sign up for the National Do Not Call Registry by calling 888-382-1222 or visiting www.donotcall.gov.

SWEEPSTAKES FRAUD

It is often difficult to know if a prize promotion is legitimate. Under federal and state law, telemarketers who use prize promotions must provide certain information such as the odds of winning a prize. If the odds cannot be determined in advance, telemarketers must tell the factors used to calculate the odds. The caller must also say that no purchase is necessary to enter or win and that winners do not have to send money to collect the prize.

Foreign Lotteries

Scam artists often based out of Canada, Nigeria, and other foreign countries use telephone and direct mail solicitations to entice American consumers to buy chances in high-stakes foreign lotteries. These lottery solicitations violate federal law, which prohibits the cross-border sale or purchase of lottery tickets by phone or email. Ignore all mail and phone solicitations for foreign lotteries. Report anything that looks like lottery material from a foreign country to the United States Postal Inspector.

The Truth About “Free” Prizes:

Some phony contest promoters use names that resemble legitimate organizations. Remember:

- It is illegal for a telemarketer to misrepresent an affiliation with or an endorsement by a government agency.
- Be wary of any sweepstakes notification received from an international or foreign lottery.

- Sales meetings to win “free” prizes often subject attendees to high-pressure sales tactics.
- Read the fine print in the notification letter, which may detail the cash value of each prize or the need to attend a sales event as part of the contest.
- Be cautious if a company urges an overnight payment. Never give out credit card or bank account numbers unless a trusted business relationship with the company has already been established.
- It is not necessary to pay an up-front fee to enter a contest or receive winnings. Legitimate sweepstakes do not require the purchase of something to enter or to improve chances of winning.

Did you know?

You can stop most unsolicited mail by writing to the Mail and Email Preference Services. This places your name and address on a list of consumers who do not want direct mail solicitations. Mail your request with a \$3 processing fee to:

DMAchoice Direct Marketing Association Post Office Box 643
Carmel, NY 10512 www.dmachoice.org
Or register online for a \$2 processing fee.

DMAchoice will also stop most mail from non-sweepstakes marketers, as well as, catalogues and charity solicitations.

FAKE CHECK SCAMS

Counterfeit or fake checks are being used in a growing number of fraudulent schemes including foreign lottery scams, check overpayment scams, Internet auctions, and secret shopper scams. Some fake checks look so real that even bank tellers are fooled. These counterfeit checks are printed with the names and addresses of legitimate financial institutions. And even though the bank account and routing numbers listed on counterfeit checks may be legitimate, the check still can be a fake.

Classified Ad and Auction Posting Scam



Often a scam artist replies to a classified ad or auction posting, offers to pay for the item with a check, and then comes up with a reason for writing the check for more than the purchase price.

The scammer asks the seller to wire back the difference after depositing the check. The seller does it and later when the check bounces, the seller is left liable for the entire amount.

Under federal law, banks generally must make funds available within two business days after depositing a check. However, just because funds are available on a check deposited; it does not mean that the check is good. Forgeries can take up to a week to be discovered. Until the bank confirms that the money has been deposited in the account, the depositor is responsible for any funds withdrawn on the check.

Avoid Counterfeit Check Scams

- Ignore any offer that asks for payment of an upfront fee for a prize or gift or wire money to strangers.
- If selling something, do not accept a check for more than the selling price. If the buyer refuses to send the correct amount, return the check and do not send the merchandise.
- If accepting payment by check, ask for a check drawn on a local bank or a bank with a local branch. If that is not possible, call the bank on which the check is drawn and ask if it is valid.
- If the buyer insists funds be wired back, end the transaction immediately. Legitimate buyers do not pressure sellers to send money by wire transfer.



Did you know?

When funds are sent through wire transfer services, the recipients can pick up the money at other locations within the same country making it nearly impossible for the sender to identify or locate the recipient. You will have little recourse if there is a problem with a wire transfer.

RELOADING SCAMS

Victims of fraudulent telemarketers often receive phone calls from people claiming to be able to get their money back. The person offering to get money back probably works for the con artist who stole it!

Scam artists buy and sell “sucker lists” with the names of people who have been defrauded through telemarketing scams. Scam artists pay top dollar for “sucker lists” because they believe that consumers who have been deceived once are vulnerable to falling victim to additional scams.

Caller ID Spoofing

Using a practice known as “caller ID spoofing,” callers can deliberately falsify the telephone number and/or name relayed as the caller ID information to disguise the identity of the calling party.

These scam artists, disguised as “recovery room” operators, may promise to get back the money lost or merchandise never received for a “small fee.” This is illegal! If a recovery operator asks for an up-front payment, **hang up!** Under the Federal Trade Commission's Telemarketing Sales Rule, recovery room operators are prohibited from requesting or receiving payment until seven business days after they deliver the recovered money or other items.

Don't Be a Victim Again:

- Be wary of people who offer to recover money or other items and request a fee in advance.
- Beware of individuals claiming to represent companies, consumer organizations, or government agencies that will recover lost money for a fee or donation to a special charity.
- Before purchasing recovery services over the phone, ask what services the company provides and the cost of each service.
- Never give out credit card or checking account numbers over the phone unless a trusted business relationship with the company has already been established.
- Be wary of people who ask for money to be sent by overnight mail or who offer a courier to come pick up payment from residences.
- Before buying over the phone from someone not known, ask for written information about the offer.

Did you know?

Federal, state, and local consumer enforcement agencies do not charge a fee for their services and never guarantee to recover stolen money.

CHARITY FRAUD

We all want to help those less fortunate; however, it is important to know if donations are sent to a legitimate charitable organization.

Before You Donate:

- Ask for written information about the organization. A legitimate charity will gladly provide this information.
- Ask the charity how donations will be spent.
- Be mindful of similar sounding names. Some fraudulent charities will use names that resemble a well-known, established organization.
- Be skeptical if someone thanks you for making a pledge you do not remember making.
- Watch for invoices claiming to have made a pledge, which was actually never made. Many phony charities use this approach to steal money.
- Be skeptical of high-pressure techniques. A legitimate charity will not demand an immediate donation.
- Do not give cash and always pay by check so there is a record of the contribution. Remember to make checks payable to the charity and not to the person soliciting on their behalf.
- Be skeptical of charities established immediately after a natural disaster.

Public Safety Groups

Consumers are often asked to contribute to first responder organizations. Although a charitable organization may have the words “police” or “firefighter” in its name, this does not necessarily mean that local police or fire departments will benefit from donations. Ask local law enforcement agencies or fire departments if they are aware of the solicitation; if they are unaware of the solicitation, it may be a scam.

Professional Solicitors



Charities often use professional solicitors to help solicit donations. Professional solicitors can legally keep a portion of the donations collected. If called for a donation, ask if the caller is a paid solicitor and what percentage of the donation they will keep. The professional solicitors must state their name, which charity they are calling on behalf of, and where they are calling from.

Did you know?

Under Louisiana law, charities that solicit using professional solicitors must register with Attorney General Jeff Landry's Office.

PAYDAY LOANS

“Get cash until payday! \$100 or more! Fast!”



Advertisements like these appear on the television, radio, Internet, and in the mail. These advertisements refer to payday loans, which come with a very high price. Check cashers and finance companies make small,

short-term, high-rate loans to consumers. To get a payday loan, a borrower usually writes a personal check - payable to the lender - for the amount he or she wishes to borrow plus a fee. The company gives the borrower the amount of the check minus the fee. Fees charged for payday loans are usually a percentage of the face value of the check or a fee charge per amount borrowed.

While many payday lending companies are legitimate, scam artists have created fraudulent payday lending sites to scam consumers in need of cash. Before receiving a payday loan, ensure that the company is legitimate.

Alternatives to Payday Loans:

- When credit is sought, it is important to shop around. Look for the credit offer with the lowest annual percentage rate (APR). Consider a small loan from your credit union or small loan company, an advance on pay from your employer, or a loan from a family member or friend.
- Ask creditors for more time to pay.

- Find out what the fee is for a late payment and whether there is an additional finance charge or a higher interest rate.
- If regularly exceeding the amount of money in the checking account - consider overdraft protection, which could help protect from future credit problems. Learn the terms of overdraft protection.
- Prepare a realistic budget; and calculate monthly and daily expenses.
- Contact a local consumer credit counseling service for help working out a debt repayment plan.
- If the only alternative is to use a payday loan, borrow only as much money as can be afforded to pay back with next paycheck. Make sure there will still be enough funds to make it to the next payday.

Did you know?

Under the Truth in Lending Act, the cost of payday loans must be disclosed. You must receive, in writing, the finance charges and the APR.

CONTRACTOR FRAUD

Older Americans are usually the target of unscrupulous contractors trying to make a quick buck.

Before hiring a contractor, use the following recommendations:

- Get at least three estimates (bids) in writing before hiring a contractor. Remember cheap does not mean qualified.
- Ask friends and family for contractor recommendations and check all contractor references.
- Have a written contract with the contractor.
- All oral promises should be added to the written contract.
- Inspect the entire job before making the final payment.
- Know with whom you are dealing. Check the contractor's license or registration number with the Louisiana State Licensing Board for Contractors.
- Keep a signed, legible copy of the contract in a safe place. All paperwork and contracts related to home repair should be in one place.
- Never pay cash! Always pay by check or money order and keep the receipts.
- Check out contractor's dissatisfaction record with Attorney General Jeff Landry's Consumer Protection Section, the Louisiana State Licensing Board for Contractors, and with the Better Business Bureau.

Get it in Writing

Before signing a home repair contract, make sure the contract contains:



- Contractor's name, address, phone, and license number.
- An estimated start and completion date.
- All contractor's responsibilities under the contract including what the contractor will and will not do.
- A detailed list of all materials and how change orders will be handled.
- A payment schedule for the contractor, subcontractors, and suppliers.

Did you know?

Less reputable contractors often solicit door-to-door, say they have materials left over from a previous job, pressure for an immediate decision, ask for payment for the entire job up-front and/or ask customers to get the necessary permits.

FUNERALS AND BURIALS



Funerals and burials are some of the most expensive purchases that a consumer will ever make. However, many are not fully prepared to make these purchases.

The Funeral Rule, enforced by the Federal Trade Commission, ensures that families know what funeral and burial options are available and the costs of these services prior to purchase.

Pre-planning a funeral allows a person to choose items he or she wants and to compare prices of funeral providers. If pre-planning a funeral - be sure to put wishes in writing and give copies to family, friends, and attorney. It is also a good idea to review these funeral plans every few years.

Be Informed

Many consumers not only want to pre-plan their funerals, but pre-pay for them as well. If pre-paying for a funeral, consider the following questions:

- (1) What am I paying for?
- (2) May I cancel the contract if I change my mind?
- (3) Am I protected if the funeral home goes out of business?

The Funeral Rule

- Every funeral home must provide:
(1) a general price list,
(2) a casket price list, and
(3) an outer burial price list.

All three lists are necessary to determine the total cost of a funeral.

- The casket will be the most expensive item. If shopping for a pre-need funeral, get a casket price list from various funeral homes to compare the costs.
- An outer burial container surrounds the casket in the grave. While not all cemeteries require an outer burial container, many do.

Funeral Planning Tips:

- If possible, shop around in advance and compare prices.
- Resist high-pressure sales tactics.
- Avoid emotional overspending.

Did you know?

The Funeral Rule gives you the right to buy only the funeral goods and services that you want. You have the right to buy separate goods (i.e., caskets) and separate services (i.e., embalming). You do not have to accept a package with items that you do not want.

LIVING TRUSTS



There is a lot of misinformation and misunderstanding about estate laws and con artists have found a new way to scam seniors by selling living trusts.

Consumers often receive postcards inviting them to attend living trust seminars or to schedule in-home appointments regarding living trusts. During these seminars or in-home meetings - the salespeople regularly exaggerate the benefits of living trusts, which are not appropriate for many consumers; and they often falsely claim that locally licensed attorneys will prepare the documents.

Living Trust "Kits"

Some businesses advertise living trust "kits." Consumers send money for these do-it-yourself kits and receive nothing in return. Other businesses use estate-planning services to gain access to consumers' financial information or to sell them other products.

A living trust, created while you are alive, lets you control the distribution of your estate. You transfer ownership of your property and your assets into the trust. You can serve as the trustee or you can select a person or an institution to be the trustee. If you are the trustee, you will have to name a successor trustee to distribute the assets at your death.

Although a living trust can be a valuable estate-planning tool for some people, it may be a waste of time and money for others.

Before you sign on the dotted line:

- Contact an attorney or banker with experience in estate planning to see if a living trust is the right option.
- Resist high-pressure sales tactics.
- Avoid salespeople giving the impression that their product is endorsed by the AARP, who does not endorse any living trust product.
- If doing a living trust, make sure the property has been transferred to the trust. If the transfers are not done properly, the trust is invalid.
- Contact Attorney General Jeff Landry's Office or the Better Business Bureau for information on the companies offering the living trusts

Did you know?

Under the Federal Trade Commission's Cooling-Off Rule, if buying a living trust at home or somewhere other than the seller's permanent place of business, the seller must provide a written statement of purchaser's right to cancel the deal within three business days.

MORTGAGE FRAUD



Scam artists target people who are having trouble paying their mortgages. Some claim to be able to rescue homeowners from foreclosures, while others promise to modify loans for a fee.

Signs of a Foreclosure Rescue Scam

If having trouble paying the mortgage or if receiving mortgage foreclosure notices, contact the mortgage company as soon as possible. If in danger of foreclosure, avoid any individual or company that:

- Requires fees in advance.
- Promises to find mistakes in loan documents that will force lenders to cancel or modify loans.
- Guarantees to stop foreclosures.
- Advises to stop payment or to stop all communication with mortgage company.

Home Equity Scams

Homeowners who are strapped for cash may be the targets of home equity scams. The elderly, minorities, and those with low income or poor credit histories should be careful when borrowing money based on the equity in their homes because certain abusive lenders target these borrowers who may unknowingly risk losing their homes.

Abusive Lending Practices

Beware of the following lending practices that may cost you your home:

Equity Stripping: A lender says you could get a loan even though your income is not enough for the monthly payments. The lender tells you to “pad” your income on the application.

Once you cannot make payments on the loan, the lender will foreclose on your home and strip the equity you have built up.

Hidden Loan Terms: A lender offers to refinance your mortgage and lower your monthly payments. The payments may be lower because you are only repaying the interest on your loan each month.

At the end of the loan term, you must repay the entire amount you borrowed in one lump sum. If you cannot pay the entire balloon payment, you may face the loss of your home.

Loan Flipping: A lender persuades you to repeatedly refinance the loan and to borrow more money. Each time you refinance- you pay additional fees and interest points, which only increases your debt.

Protect Yourself and Your Home:

- Do not agree to a home equity loan whose payments exceed your monthly income.
- Do not sign any document you have not read, do not understand, or has blank spaces. Contact an attorney before assigning your property to anyone.
- Keep careful records of your loan payments, including billing statements and cancelled checks.
- Consider all the costs of financing before you agree to a loan and ask questions about any part of the loan you do not understand.



Did you know?

With most reverse mortgages, you have at least three business days after closing to cancel without penalty. To cancel, you must notify the lender in writing by certified mail and ask for a return receipt. This will allow you to document when the lender received the documents. Keep copies of all correspondence. After you cancel, the lender has 20 days to return any money you paid for the reverse mortgage.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG SCAMS

Consumers have many choices for buying prescription drugs; however, the Internet sells many counterfeit drugs that could be ineffective or harmful.

Buying Medications Safely Online

- Do not buy from an online seller that does not require a prescription.
- Do not deal with a website that will provide a prescription based on an online questionnaire, without an in-person physical exam.
- Do not buy from a site that advertises “miracle drugs” for a new cure to a serious disease. These drugs are usually not approved by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) and could be dangerous or ineffective.
- Make sure the seller is properly licensed and that a licensed pharmacist is available to answer your questions.
- Beware of online pharmacists that do not list an address or toll-free phone number to contact in case of a problem.



Did you know?

If you suspect that you have bought a counterfeit drug online, report it. Notify the online drug seller and contact the FDA's Medwatch program at **800-332-1088**.

IDENTITY THEFT



Identity theft occurs when someone misuses your personal information, such as your Social Security number or bank account information, for

financial gain. An identity thief can misuse your information to open fraudulent credit card accounts, secure deposits on cars and housing, and receive utility service in your name.

This form of financial sabotage can devastate your credit and require hours of your time to resolve. In the meantime - you may have difficulty writing checks, getting loans, or finding employment. It is important to know how identity theft occurs, how to prevent it, and what to do if you become a victim.

How Does an Identity Thief Get Personal Information?

- Stealing wallets and purses that contain drivers' licenses, credit cards, and bankcards.
- Stealing mail that includes account information, pre-approved credit card offers, and tax information.
- Rummaging through trash cans looking for personal information, such as old bank statements and bills.
- Using personal information shared over the Internet.
- Contacting credit card issuer to change the mailing address on account and making charges on it. Since the mailing address has been

changed, it may take time to realize that there is a problem.

- Opening a new credit card account using victim's name, date of birth, and Social Security number. The identity thief does not pay the bills, and the negative information is recorded on credit report.
- Opening a bank account in victim's name and writing bad checks.

Medical Identity Theft



Medical identity theft occurs when someone steals your personal information, such as Social Security number or Medicare identification number, and uses it to commit health care fraud. Medical identity thieves use stolen identities to receive medical treatment and prescription drugs or to even scam insurance companies by making fraudulent claims. If a scammer receives treatment in your name, that criminal's health problems could become a part of your medical records - affecting your ability to get medical care and insurance benefits or even affecting treatment decisions made by doctors in the future. The scammer's unpaid medical debts also could end up on your credit report, leaving you responsible for disputing those charges.

It is important to catch medical identity theft early.

- Read every “Explanation and Benefits” statement sent by your health insurer. Follow up on any item that you do not recognize.
- At least once a year, ask your health insurer for a list of the benefits they paid in your name.
- Regularly check your credit reports. You are entitled to a free report from each of the three nationwide companies every 12 months. You can order your free credit report from www.annualcreditreport.com.

If you think that you may be a victim of medical identity theft:

- Ask your health care provider or hospital for your medical records. You have a right to get copies of your current medical files from each health care provider, though you may have to pay for them. You also have a right to have inaccurate or incomplete information removed.
- Contact your medical provider and insurance provider.

Did you know?

If you are a victim of identity theft, you can file a police report with your local law enforcement agency. Once you obtain the police report, forward the information to all three credit bureaus and the companies where the fraudulent accounts were opened.

How to Keep Your Good Name:

- Before you reveal your personal information, ask how it will be used.
- Minimize the amount of personal information you carry in your purse or wallet and keep items with personal information in a safe place.
- Shred pre-approved credit card offers, bank statements, credit card statements, and insurance forms before putting them in the trash.
- Only give your Social Security number when it is absolutely necessary. Ask to use other identifying information when possible.
- Place a Security Freeze on your credit report and request a copy of your free credit report every year from each credit bureau. Review your credit report for accuracy and to ensure it includes only those activities you have authorized.
- Ask about information security procedures in your workplace or at businesses, doctors' offices, or other institutions that collect personally identifying information from you.

Did you know?

The Federal Trade Commission maintains the Identity Theft Data Clearinghouse, the federal government's centralized identity theft complaint database. If you have been an identity theft victim, contact the **FTC Identity Theft Hotline** at **877-438-4338** or visit **www.consumer.gov/idtheft**

DOOR-TO-DOOR SALES

Door-to-door sales are subject to the Federal Trade Commission's "Cooling-Off Rule." This rule gives consumers three days to cancel purchases of \$25 or more if items were bought at a location that is not the seller's permanent place of business. This right to cancel extends to midnight of the third business day after the sale.

Under the Cooling-Off Rule, the seller must disclose these cancellation rights at the time of sale. The seller must also provide two copies of a cancellation form and a copy of the contract or receipt. The contract or receipt should contain the date of sale, the name and address of the business, and explain the right to cancel.

Senior citizens are more likely to encounter door-to-door salespeople offering home improvements, funeral service contracts, living trusts, alarm and home automation systems, and magazine subscriptions.

Door-to-Door Con Artists Will:

- Greet you by name. The con artists may have gotten your name from a telephone book or the Internet.
- Approach you while you are outside your home.
- Demand cash.
- Claim to go hungry if you do not buy their products.

- Say they are working in your neighborhood but are unable to provide you with names of past customers.
- Prey on your sympathy by telling you that their families are in need of money.

Slam the Door on Fraud:

- Do not buy on impulse.
- Avoid high-pressure sales tactics. Resist the urge to make an immediate decision.
- Be certain to understand all terms of the contract and that the contract is complete.
- Do not sign a contract that has blank spaces.
- If there is a problem, be sure to obtain legitimate address and phone number in order to contact the company.



Did you know?

Many door-to-door con artists will use excuses to get inside homes, such as they are looking for an address in the neighborhood or that they are from a water company and need to test the water.

INVESTMENT FRAUD



You may receive a letter in the mail or see an infomercial on television promoting a conference or seminar that promises quick money. The speaker or mailing may offer investment information that you can use to start a business or invest in a product.

Testimonials and success stories will be the driving force to convince you that these investment opportunities are guaranteed.

Beware of the following investment scheme pitches:

- You can earn quick money without experience or training.
- The business or program opportunity is only offered for a limited time.
- The deal is a “sure thing” that will continue to show returns for years.
- You will reap financial rewards even if only working part-time or from home.
- You will be coached each step to success.

Investment opportunities that claim to be low risk and high reward are almost always fraud. Beware of promoters who pressure you to buy before having a chance to fully investigate an investment opportunity. The seminar pitchers make impossible guarantees and pressure with “act now” approaches. Be wary of unsolicited offers.

If You Decide to Attend an Investment Seminar Event:

- Do not listen to anyone who promises low risk and high profits.
- Do not believe the extraordinary success stories. Most of these people were probably paid to give glowing reviews.
- Be cautious of seminar representatives who do not want to answer all questions or who give evasive answers. Get everything in writing and do not sign any paperwork at the seminar. Take the information home, read it again, and then consult someone trustworthy.
- Be cautious of retirement investment “opportunities.”

Before Investing:

- Independently verify claims. Consider the source and be skeptical of references.
- Never give out personal information.
- Ensure both the promoter and the security are each registered with the Louisiana Office of Financial Institutions.
- Research the company. Check out the company’s financial statements.
- Look out for high-pressure pitches especially “once-in-a-lifetime” chances.

Did you know?

You can inquire about a securities salesperson or report investment fraud to the Louisiana Office of Financial Institutions at 877-516-3653 or www.ofi.la.gov.

PREVENTING ONLINE FRAUD

Phishing occurs when Internet fraudsters impersonate a business to trick you into giving out personal information.

Delete all emails and text messages that ask you to confirm or provide personal information (credit card and bank account information, Social Security numbers, passwords, etc.) Legitimate companies do not ask for this information via email or text.

Fraudulent messages may appear to be from organizations with whom you do business, including your local bank. Do not reply, click links, or call phone numbers provided in the message. These messages direct you to spoof sites that may look real but are actually there to steal your information so a scammer can make fraudulent charges or commit crimes in your name.

Avoid Phishing Scams

- Use trusted security software updates automatically.
- Do not email personal or financial information. Remember, email is not a secure method of transmitting personal information.
- Only provide personal or financial information through an organization's website when you have typed in the web address yourself, and the URL begins with https (the s stands for secure).

What to Do Before You Are Hacked

- Use unique passwords for important sites, like your bank and email. Safeguard all usernames and passwords.
- Do not click on links or open attachments in emails unless you know who sent them and what they are.
- Download free software only from sites you know and trust.
- Do not treat public computers like your personal computer.
- If it looks like your email or social media account might have been taken over – make sure your security protections are up-to-date, reset your passwords, and warn your friends.



Did you know?

It is important to forward all phishing emails to spam@uce.gov and to the company, bank or organization impersonated in the email. You may also report phishing emails to the Anti-Phishing working group at reportphishing@antiphishing.org.

REPORTING FRAUD

Contact the following agencies for additional information regarding elder fraud:

Attorney General Jeff Landry's Consumer Protection Section

Post Office Box 94005
Baton Rouge, LA 70804
800-351-4889
www.AGJeffLandry.com

Louisiana Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs

Provides information on services, programs, and opportunities for the elderly.

Post Office Box 61
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
225-342-7100
www.goea.louisiana.gov

Louisiana State Licensing Board for Contractors

Licenses contractors doing business in Louisiana.

2525 Quail Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
800-256-1392
www.lslbc.louisiana.gov

Louisiana Office of Financial Institutions

Regulates financial institutions and handles complaints and inquiries regarding consumer credit and banking.

Post Office Box 94095
Baton Rouge, LA 70804
225-925-4660
www.ofi.state.la.us

Louisiana Department of Insurance

Regulates insurance companies and handles complaints and inquiries about insurance issues.

Post Office Box 94214
Baton Rouge, LA 70804
800-259-5300
www.lds.la.gov38

Louisiana Do Not-Call Registry

Reduces telemarketing calls.

Post Office Box 91154
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
877-676-0773

www.lpsc.org

National Consumers League

Provides information to avoid becoming victims of fraud.

1701 K Street, NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20006
202-835-3323

www.fraud.org

DMAchoice: Data and Marketing Association

Reduces direct mail solicitations.

Post Office Box 643
Carmel, NY 10512
212-768-7277

www.dmachoice.org

U.S. Postal Inspection Service

Handles mail order complaints.

Attn: Mail Fraud
433 West Harrison Street, Room 3255
Chicago, IL 60699
877-876-2455

www.postalinspectors.uspis.gov

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)

Provides information and assistance with fighting financial exploitation.

601 E Street, NW Washington, DC 20049
888-687-2277

www.aarp.org

Federal Trade Commission

Protects consumers from businesses operating unfairly and maintains the competitive process without burdening business activity.

600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20580
877-382-4357

www.ftc.gov