

**You worked hard for your money - don't let a stranger steal it from you.**

# ONLINE CLASSIFIED AD FRAUD

## **If you are BUYING online**

If you respond to an online classified ad, **BEWARE** - not all private party ads are legitimate. While you have some protections when you shop online with a retailer, you do not have *any* protections if the transaction involves a private party.

Scam artists post fraudulent ads to “sell” everything - from large-ticket items such as cars, boats, and homes, to small items such as collectibles, hobby items, and even puppies! They are just waiting for your e-mail.

When you agree to a price, the “seller” will ask you to wire them the money. If you do, the scam artist often will claim there are additional, unexpected costs that also must be paid before the item can be sent to you. The explanations are reasonable - but it's still a scam!

- **NEVER** wire money directly to a private individual; instead, use a third-party payer (such as Paypal).
- Be aware that there is no “internet police force” to track down a private seller or get your money back. If you don't receive the item, or there are problems with it when you get it - you are on your own.

## **If you are SELLING online**

If you are selling an item on the Internet and someone offers to give you more than the asking price, **BEWARE!** This IS a scam!

The scammer doesn't care what's being sold, he just wants to reel you in. Once you agree on a price, the “buyer” will give you a bogus reason for needing to send you a cashier's check or money order for more money than the purchase price. The scammer will ask you to wire the extra amount on to a third party. The counterfeit checks and money orders are very realistic and have fooled many bank tellers. In some cases, bank tellers have even called the issuing bank, and falsely been told the account is legitimate.

- **NEVER** agree to deposit a check you receive in the mail or by courier and wire money back to the sender. There is **no** legitimate reason for someone who is giving you money to ask you to wire some of it elsewhere. The check *will* bounce and you will owe the bank the money because you are responsible for any checks you deposit.
- Wiring money is just like **sending cash**. Once you have completed the wire transaction, the money **is gone!** You can't get your money back.