



Dear Member,

Recently we have seen an increase in the number of fake check scams in circulation. We want to protect our Members from unknowingly becoming a victim of a financial scam. On the reverse side of this letter is information from the Federal Trade Commission's website, ftc.gov.

In these scams, Members deposit what they think is a real check. Because the credit union makes the funds available the Member thinks the check was good. They then send/provide money, goods or items of value to others as instructed. The check is then returned by the other financial institution and the money is withdrawn from your account, possibly making it overdrawn.

The following questions are to help you identify if this check is a part of a fake check scam:

- | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Do you know the person or company that sent you the check? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Was this check unexpected? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Was an explanation needed for why this money was due to you? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Did you receive the check through a delivery company other than the United States Post Office? (fraudulent checks are often sent via shopping companies because of mail laws) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Have you been offered a job or assignment for which this check was sent? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Have you been notified that you won a prize, sweepstakes or inheritance? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is this check payment for an item you are selling or have sold? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are you supposed to send or give money or item(s) of monetary value to someone after depositing this check? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered Yes to any of the above questions, there is a higher risk that the check you have is not real. I understand that by cashing, depositing or otherwise negotiating this check I am responsible for it. The credit union may make funds from this check available to me before it has been notified that the check is not good. Once notified the check is not valid the credit union will deduct the money from my account which may leave my account overdrawn and requiring repayment of the funds.

The following information is from ftc.gov:

Why Do These Scams Work?

These scams work because fake checks generally look just like real checks, even to bank employees. They are often printed with the names and addresses of legitimate financial institutions. They may even *be* real checks written on bank accounts that belong to identity theft victims. It can take weeks for a bank to figure out that the check is a fake.

Fake Checks and Your Bank or Credit Union

By law, banks and credit unions have to make deposited funds available quickly, usually within two days. **When the funds are made available in your account, the bank or credit union may say the check has “cleared,” but that doesn’t mean it’s a good check.** Fake checks can take weeks to be discovered and untangled. By that time, the scammer has any money you sent, and you’re stuck paying the money back to the bank or credit union. Your best bet: Don’t rely on money from a check unless you know and trust the person you’re dealing with.

Types of Fake Checks Scams

Fake checks are used in many types of scams. Here are some examples:

- **Mystery shopping.** Scammers pretend to hire people as mystery shoppers and tell them their first assignment is to evaluate a retailer that sells gift cards, money orders, or a money transfer service, like Western Union or MoneyGram. The shopper gets a check with instructions to deposit it in a personal bank account and wire it to someone else. But once the money is wired, the person on the other end can disappear.
- **Personal assistants.** People apply online and get hired as personal assistants. They get a check and are told to use the money to buy gift cards or to buy equipment or supplies for their new client. Once the scammers get the gift card PIN numbers, they use them instantly, leaving the “personal assistant” without the money when the bank figures out the check is bad.
- **Car wrap decals.** People interested in car wrap advertising are told to deposit checks and send money to decal installers — who don’t exist.
- **Claiming prizes.** Sweepstakes “winners” are given checks and told to send money to cover taxes, shipping and handling charges, or processing fees. But that’s not how legitimate sweepstakes work.
- **Overpayments.** People buying something from you online “accidentally” send a check for too much and ask you to refund the balance.

How to Avoid a Fake Check Scam

- **Never use money from a check to send gift cards, money orders, or wire money to strangers or someone you just met.** Many scammers demand that you send money through money transfer services like Western Union or MoneyGram, or buy gift cards and send them the PIN numbers. Once you wire money, or give someone the gift card PINs, it is like giving someone cash. It’s almost impossible to get it back.
- **Toss offers that ask you to pay for a prize.** If it’s free, you shouldn’t have to pay to get it.
- **Don’t accept a check for more than the selling price.** You can bet it’s a scam.