



FRAUD ALERT

Overpayment Scam

What is an Overpayment Scam?

An overpayment scam can look many ways, but most recently it has hit Mesa County and looks like...someone legitimately places a personal ad in a local newspaper and gets a call from a prospective buyer. That buyer claims to be unavailable for whatever reason. The buyer makes plans to send a friend or agent to pick up the item that is listed for sale, but prior to the pick-up a money order is shipped for payment. The money order is usually made out to be a few thousand dollars more than the item is listed for sale, and the money order is intended to cover the cost of the item, agent fees, wire transfer fees, etc. The seller is instructed and agrees to deposit the money order into their personal account, keep the agreed upon amount for payment, and then wire the difference to the buyer in their overseas location, but the money gets wired before the bank notifies the seller that the money order is fraudulent.

How can it be used to commit a fraud?

The “buyer” and the buyer’s “agent” are most likely never in the United States, which is why they use a relay system when calling the seller and ship the money order for payment via UPS or Fed Ex. Providing a fake money order and getting the legitimate seller to hand over their own cash , after keeping the ‘difference of the payment’ (i.e. handling fees, agent fees, etc.), is fraud. The “agent” never shows up to pick-up the item that was supposedly purchased. In Mesa County, three of these such reports were made with the Sheriff’s Office today (9-30-09).

What can I do to prevent this fraud from happening to me?

When selling an item to an unknown buyer, have them pay in cash or hold the item until the check, cashiers check or money order, clears your bank account. Be cautious about accepting payment for more than you are selling your item. And don’t agree to forward money to anyone when you are selling an item. For more information about various overpayment scams visit: <http://www.brighthub.com/internet/security-privacy/articles/6152.aspx>

To report a Fraud in Mesa County, contact:

Mesa County Sheriff's Office Main Number at (970) 244-3500