PUBLISHER'S CLEARING HOUSE: SWEEPSTAKES SCAM

A mailing scam involves criminals posing as "Publisher's Clearing House, Inc". Sweepstakes scams have been around for years, but because of the use of the popular "Publisher's Clearing House" name, the bottom line motive in this tip is to refresh the consumers' memories and prevent them from becoming victims.

The scam works as follows: The criminals display the "Publisher's Clearing House" name on a sweepstakes letter. The letter is then mailed to consumers, along with a $3,000.00 to $5,000.00 processing fee check, informing them that they are the winners of a large sweepstakes. The letter gives instructions on claiming and obtaining the winnings. Losses occur when the victims call the telephone number in the letter and speak with a criminal, who advises them to deposit the processing fee check into their primary account. The victims are then advised to write a check from their account for a slightly lesser amount and purchase a money gram. They are told to money gram the funds to an individual at an address outside of the United States. Unfortunately, within days the deposited check is returned unpaid, and the victims lose the amount of the money gram and any other checks that were drawn against the fraudulent funds. These lottery and sweepstakes scam letters are being mailed out by the thousands, and generally target the elderly.

Always check with your financial institution before acting upon any written instructions that accompany checks or "payment processing forms" that are received by mail.

To learn more, you can access the following website: http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news/lucky_day.html. Once on the website, click on "Scam Alerts" at the top.