

Fake Check Scams

Prevention tip: There is no legitimate reason why anyone would give you a check or money order and ask you to wire money anywhere in return.

There are many variations of the fake check scam. Many Sharon residents have been victims of these scams in recent years. It could start with someone offering to pay you for a service, or purchase an item you've advertised for sale. Other offers promise an "advance" on a sweepstakes you've supposedly won, or pay the first installment on the millions that you'll receive for agreeing to have money in a foreign country transferred to your bank account for safekeeping. Scammers may reach you by telephone, text message, mail, or email.

In nearly all instances of fake check scams, the scammer will ask you to send money back to them in some way, shape or form. They will send you a check for goods or services for more than the requested amount, and will tell you to go forward and deposit their check and wire them the additional money. In other scams, they will tell you to wire money for taxes, processing, legal fees, shipping, or any number of other expenses that you must pay before receiving your money or reward.

The checks that scammers send you, whether they are personal checks or cashier's checks, may look and feel real. The checks may even be from a legitimate business or corporation, but have been forged.

Be aware that fraudulent checks will clear quickly. Under federal law (Expedited Funds Availability Act), banks have to make the funds you deposit available quickly – usually one to five days, depending on the type of check. The bank will discover the check is bad, and will bounce, within a few weeks.

Your deposits are your responsibility. If you have deposited a check that then bounces, the bank will withdraw the original dollar amount credited to your account. If your account doesn't have enough money to cover the deduction, the bank may sue you to recover the funds.

If you feel you've been a victim of a fake check scam, or would like more information, you may contact the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office Consumer Hotline at (617)-727-8400 or online at www.mass.gov/ago. You may contact the Sharon Police Department at 781-784-1587.