

Lottery, Prize and Sweepstakes Scams

According to the Federal Trade Commission, lottery, prize, and sweepstakes scams are among the top complaints it receives each year. Telemarketers often target older adults, contacting them over the phone or via text to let them know they've "won!"

One question you should ask yourself is, did you enter the sweepstakes or play the lottery? If not, you absolutely didn't win. Below are some simple ways to spot and avoid prize scams:

- **Don't pay to get a prize.** If you are asked to pay a fee for "taxes," "shipping and handling charges," or "processing fees" to get your prize, it's a scam. Stop the conversation and hang up.
- **Don't give out your financial or personal information.** If you are asked to provide a bank account number, credit card number, or Social Security number to collect your prize, it's a scam. Stop the conversation and hang up.
- **Don't click on links.** Scammers hope you'll click on links that will take your personal information or download malware on your device. Delete the messages without clicking on the links and don't respond.

Protect yourself before becoming a victim of these types of scams:

- Register your phone number(s) on the National Do Not Call list by calling 1-888-382-1222 or visiting the website www.donotcall.gov
- Do not answer calls from numbers you do not recognize. If the person calling really needs to reach you, they will leave a message.
- Never buy anything over the phone unless you initiate the call.
- Never send money to strangers, even if they say they are with the police.

If you are a victim, contact your local law enforcement agency.