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# Office of the Attorney General Consumer Alert — Sweepstakes & Lottery Scams

“Congratulations, you have just been selected to win \$10,000! All you have to do is send a small payment to cover shipping and processing and we'll send you your prize!”

**C** This might sound too good to be true -- and it likely is. Scammers often use fake prize notices to take advantage of optimistic victims, who provide their hard-earned money up front and eagerly await the arrival of prize money that never comes.

You can protect yourself by learning how to spot the red flags of Lottery and Sweepstakes Scams.

## Warning Signs of Lottery and Sweepstakes Scams:

- ◆ You did not enter a lottery, but you receive a notice or call from a person claiming to work for the D.C. Lottery and Charitable Games Control Board, or a similar entity.
  - The D.C. Lottery will **never** contact consumers unless they specifically enter into a promotional game sponsored by the D.C. Lottery.
- ◆ You receive a notice or call informing you that you have won a lottery in another country.
  - It is **against federal law** to participate in a foreign lottery, so no foreign lottery representatives should be contacting you for your information.
- ◆ You receive a notice or call informing you that you have won a sweepstakes, but you need to pay a fee in order to claim your winnings.
  - Unlike a lottery, a legitimate prize promotion should **not** require **any** purchase or payment of money for a consumer to participate or win.
- ◆ You receive a notice or call from a person claiming to work with the federal government or a “Federal Sweepstakes Board.”
  - The federal government does **not** oversee sweepstakes, and **no** federal government agency will contact you to ask for money in order to claim a prize.

## How do I avoid falling for a Lottery or Sweepstakes Scam?

- ◆ A lottery requires you to purchase a ticket in order to participate. If you did not enter to participate in a lottery, ignore any notices saying that you have won.
- ◆ Sweepstakes are free games of chance. Do not send money in advance in order to participate in a sweepstakes: It is illegal to require any payment or purchase to enter a sweepstakes or to increase your odds of winning.



Connect with the Office of the Attorney General

441 4th Street, NW., Washington, DC 20001

Phone: (202) 727-3400 Fax: (202) 347-8922 TTY: (202) 727-3400

Email: [dc.oag@dc.gov](mailto:dc.oag@dc.gov)

CONSUMER HOTLINE — (202) 442-9828

STAY CONNECTED:



[www.oag.dc.gov](http://www.oag.dc.gov)

- ◆ Do not send money to claim your prize. This includes requests to pay for taxes, shipping and handling, insurance, or processing fees.
- ◆ Never provide your bank account number or other personal information. Since you are not required to pay to participate in a sweepstakes or receive a prize, there is no need to give out this private information.
- ◆ Know who is allowed to contact you about winning:
  - D.C. Lottery will only contact winners who entered into a D.C. Lottery-sponsored promotional game. If you did not enter the lottery, do not provide any information.
  - No foreign entity may contact you about winning their lottery. Since it is illegal to participate in foreign lotteries, you should not pay or give any private information to any person claiming that you have won.
  - No federal or District government employee will ever contact you about winning the lottery or a sweepstakes, so do not provide any information to people claiming to work for a government entity that provides prizes.
- ◆ Don't be afraid to hang up if you feel pressured, if the caller is not answering your questions, or if you simply don't get a "good feeling" about the caller.

### **Three Easy Rules for Avoiding Lottery and Sweepstakes Scams:**

If you think you are being targeted by a lottery or sweepstakes scam, remember these three easy rules:

1. DO NOT RESPOND!
2. DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY!
3. DO NOT GIVE OUT PERSONAL INFORMATION!

### **What Should I do if I'm the Victim of a Lottery or Sweepstakes Scam?**

- ◆ You can file a complaint with the Attorney General for the District of Columbia's Office of Consumer Protection by calling our Consumer Hotline at (202) 442-9828, emailing ([consumer.protection@dc.gov](mailto:consumer.protection@dc.gov)), or writing to the Office at:

**Office of Consumer Protection**  
Office of the Attorney General  
441 4th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

- ◆ You may file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580; (877) 382-4357; [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov).
- ◆ If the notice came in the mail, you may also file a mail fraud complaint with the United States Postal Inspection Service at <https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov/forms/MailFraudComplaint.aspx>.



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