



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Stanislaus County Courthouse
11th and I Streets
Room 200, 2nd Floor
P.O. Box 442, Modesto, CA 95353

JAMES C. BRAZELTON
District Attorney

(209) 525-5550

FAX: (209) 525-5545

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Re: **Canadian Lottery Scam**

For more information contact:

John J. Goold, Chief Deputy D.A.

(209) 525-5550

MODESTO, CALIFORNIA – Stanislaus County District Attorney James Brazelton today warned senior citizens and other residents of Stanislaus County to beware of the latest financial scam to hit the Modesto area.

The District Attorney is joining with the Stanislaus Elder Abuse Prevention Alliance and other law enforcement groups to get the word out to the public about a group of criminals who are currently stealing money from local senior citizens.

There are several variations of this scam. In one, a senior citizen is contacted by telephone by someone who claims that the senior has won the Canadian Lottery and needs to pay a “tariff” or fee to collect their winnings. In another variation, seniors are contacted by someone who asks them to assist with dispersing money and that they will be paid a fee or commission for their assistance.

In both situations the victim is sent a bank check that they deposit to their own personal account. Then, as instructed, they either withdraw and send cashier checks in specific amounts or make electronic transfers from their own account. The crooks goal is to have the victim send cashiers checks by either mail or via electronic transfer so that it may be negotiated immediately and the cash withdrawn. When the check is later discovered to be

a fake, the victim's bank bounces the check and the money is withdrawn from the victim's account, since it was already spent by purchasing the cashier checks or making electronic transfers. A number of people have been bilked of several thousand dollars in this scam.

In any of these variations on the scheme, the victim sends the cashier checks or makes the electronic transfers prior to the bank making sure the suspect check clears. Usually within 7 days later the check is discovered to be counterfeit. These criminals are sophisticated enough that catching them is very difficult and by using sophisticated methods and unsuspecting elderly victims they have successfully avoided detection by law enforcement so far.

The District Attorney's Elder Abuse Prosecution Unit, local law enforcement, and SEAPA are advising our local Seniors and financial institutions in our area to beware of this scam. Anyone who is contacted by telephone by someone offering to send or give them money should realize that this is the most common method used by criminals to steal money from victims. Almost 100% of the time such telephone contacts are a scam designed to take an innocent person's money. Senior citizens are advised to not send cashier's checks or electronically transfer funds to anyone or any business they don't personally know of or have had prior dealings with.

Anyone who suspects they have been the victim of a crime such as this should report it to their local law enforcement agency.