

POPULAR CON GAMES AND HOW TO RECOGNIZE THEM

The object of any con game is to cause you to part with your money or other thing of value. Most con games are initiated by people who approach you on the street or call on you at your home. Be suspicious of ANY plan, idea, scheme, business deal or whatever that requires you to part with your money on short notice.

THE PIGEON DROP

Cons like the "pigeon drop" are very common. In this scam the victim is approached by persons claiming to have found a large sum of money. The suspects tell the victim they would like to share the money with the victim, but ask the victim to put up some of his own money as a gesture of good faith. Packages, bags, or whatever are switched and the victim ends up with a wad of paper or the like and the suspects are nowhere to be found.

ROCKS IN THE BOX

In the "rocks in the box" scam, the victim is approached by a suspect who offers to sell him a new TV or VCR or similar item at a very low price. Once the victim parts with his money he finds himself stuck with a box containing bricks or other junk used to simulate the weight of the claimed contents of the box.

BANK EXAMINER

The "bank examiner" con is commonly practiced on older females. In this scam the victim is contacted, usually by phone, by a person claiming to be an officer of the bank at which she has an account. The caller claims that due to computer malfunction or other problem, the bank needs to verify certain information. During the conversation, the caller tries to obtain needed information about the victim's account balance, recent account activity, etc. The caller will also try to determine if the victim lives alone, etc. If the phoney bank officer gets the needed information he will thank the victim, and tell her he will call her back if there are any problems.

After a short time the phoney bank officer will call the victim again and tell her that the problem has been caused by

a bank employee that they suspect of stealing from customer's accounts, including the victim's. The victim is asked if she would assist the bank in catching the dishonest employee. The victim, wanting to help nab the crook, often agrees. She is then given the "plan" by the phoney bank officer. He tells the victim that a "dummy" account has been set up in her name for this event.

She is to go to the bank and to the suspected dishonest employee and withdraw \$3000, the amount stolen from her account. The phoney bank officer tells the victim that the dishonest employee, knowing that the withdrawal will cause the victim's account to be overdrawn, will have to steal the money from yet another account to make up the difference. The phoney bank officer tells the victim that the dishonest employee's actions will be monitored on closed-circuit TV, and this is how he/she will be caught. The victim is assured that her account is fully insured and she will suffer no loss due to the employee's dishonesty. The victim follows through with the plan and withdraws the agreed amount.

The victim then meets the phoney bank official at a pre-determined location. The phoney bank official then takes the money from the victim, telling her that it actually came from the "dummy" account and not her account, and that it is needed as evidence. The victim is given a receipt for the money and of course neither the money or the bank officer is ever seen again!

BAIL BOND SCAM

The victim is contacted by phone by a person claiming to be a friend of a relative of the victim. The victim is told that the relative has been arrested for an outstanding warrant or some other minor charge, and needs money to get out of jail. The "friend" asks the victim for the bail money. If the victim agrees, the caller will arrange for himself or another person to pick up the money.

PHONEY C.O.D. SCAM

The suspect will scout a neighborhood to find a suitable unoccupied home. He will check a city directory publication to determine the name of the homeowner. He will put the name on a phoney shipping label and attach that to a box containing rocks or similar type debris. He will then return dressed in an "express delivery" type of uniform. He will pretend to knock or ring the doorbell at the unoccupied house. Getting no answer, he will then go to a next-door or nearby neighbor and ask them to accept the package and pay

the C.O.D. fee.

HOME IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

The suspects drive to the victim's house in a contractor type vehicle and dressed in workman's clothing. They tell the victim they have just finished a large roofing job (or driveway resurfacing, etc.) and have some materials left over. They tell the victim they will use the left-over material to repair the victim's roof, driveway, or whatever, at a large discount. If the victim agrees, the suspects will do a quick, shoddy, job with cheap material. These con artists usually travel from town to town perpetrating this scam, staying away from their home town where they would surely be caught in a short time.