

Attorney General Alerts Seniors to Scams, Frauds



By Greg Abbott
Attorney General of Texas

Last month, an elderly central Texas man received a call from a person claiming to represent the Canadian Lottery. The enthusiastic “lottery official” told his victim to send money to pay for the tax on an enormous “prize.” It was a hoax. The man lost nearly his entire life savings. In fact, it could have been a lot worse. He had taken out a second mortgage and was going to fly to Canada to deliver 50,000 dollars in “tax money” when my office intervened.

Protecting senior citizens is a top priority of this administration. Providing accurate, timely information about consumer scams is one way the Office of the Attorney General achieves this. It could mean the difference between a few victims or a thousand victims. That is why we created the new “Senior Alert” bulletin.

Sign Up

To Sign up for the online Senior Alerts, go to our agency’s Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us and click on “E-mail

Subscriptions” in the lower right-hand navigation bar. You can enter your information on a secure server, using the password of your choice. You can sign up for other e-mail notifications as well. We offer e-mail notification of opinions, open records rulings, and press releases. You can even receive these newspaper columns by e-mail.

Senior Alerts are available in hard copy. Request a hard copy by calling (800) 252-8011. Senior Alerts, like all of our publications, are free and are not protected by copyright. You are welcome to reproduce them and distribute them as needed.

Roof Repair Scams

We released a Senior Alert on January 9, 2003 about a scam in Houston. Two individuals, posing as roof repairmen, approached an elderly woman at her Houston home. They claimed that they had worked on the roof years ago and that they wanted to work on the roof again because it was “damaged” due to recent rain. They were persistent and pressured the homeowner into signing over a check. As soon as they left, the woman called her daughter, who put a stop payment on the check. One of the men was arrested at the bank as he tried to cash the check.

Other home repair scams involve unnecessary and over-priced driveway repairs. In some cases, workers claim to repair asphalt driveways when in fact they are simply spray-painting the existing asphalt.

Yet another Senior Alert involved a man who posed as an employee of a utility company. He told a homeowner that major repairs were needed, and then fled with a check.

What to Do

If you have been victimized, or have witnessed an incident or situation that concerns you, call your local police or sheriff’s department immediately and make a report. If you are aware of a scam that targets senior Texans, I encourage you to report your information to us as well, either by calling (800) 252-8011 or by using the online reporting form in the Senior Alert section of our Web site.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

SENIOR ALERT

The Office of the Attorney General protects seniors!

Sign up for Senior Alerts on our Web site at:
www.oag.state.tx.us

To request a hard copy call:
(800) 252-8011

You did not win a foreign lottery!
Lottery officials do not collect taxes.

Beware of unsolicited, door-to-door home repair offers!

Check references carefully. Make sure you know how to find any person who will be working for you.

Do not pay for work that has not been completed.

Demand identification from anyone claiming to be an “inspector” or the representative of the city, county, or utility company.



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General’s Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us.