



State of Utah

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For Immediate Release:
October 7, 2009

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Consumer Alert: International Mail Fraud Scheme Identified

*Consumers Should Contact the Utah Insurance Department's Fraud Division If They Receive
What Appears To Be A \$4,500 Check From Nationwide Insurance*

Salt Lake City, UT - Utah residents are being warned of an international mail fraud scheme that has spread to 10 states. "We have not as yet received any complaints of this nature," reported Utah Insurance Commissioner D. Kent Michie. "However, it is important that residents be made aware of this scheme."

Residents in 10 states have received counterfeit checks bearing the Nationwide name. Each check has been issued in the amount of \$4,500 and has been accompanied by a letter which informs the recipient that they are the winner of a \$150,000 "Consumer Promotion Draw" organized for consumers who shop in major stores in the US, Canada and United Kingdom. The letter goes on to explain the \$4,500 check has been issued to cover the "Non-Resident Government Tax" the consumer will have to pay to a British Tax Officer. The individuals generating the correspondence and counterfeit checks have no affiliation with Nationwide Insurance and are fraudulently using the Nationwide name.

In order to receive the \$150,000 prize, recipients are told they must cash the check and then forward \$3,750, by Moneygram International or via a Western Union Money Transfer, to an address located in the United Kingdom. While residents are provided with an 1-866 number to call, they are urged to keep the matter confidential until their claim has been processed.

Residents should be leery of "advanced fee scams" such as this, as they stand to lose a great deal of money. In this particular situation, if a consumer were to cash the fraudulent check, they could find themselves owing the bank between \$3,750 and \$4,500.

As residents are defrauded of millions of dollars each year, the Department would like to provide Utah residents with the following tips so they do not find themselves the victim of a mail fraud scheme:

- If an offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Be skeptical of any correspondence offering you the opportunity to win a large sum of money in exchange for specific information.

- Be leery of checks received from companies you do not do business with. The check is most likely fraudulent.
- If the name of a well known company is noted on the correspondence received, contact the company to verify the legitimacy of the letter.
- Be wary of sweepstakes or contests that require you to send money to a P.O. Box, a drop-box or an overseas address before you can claim your prize.

Utah residents who receive or have received what appears to be a \$4,500 check from Nationwide Insurance should immediately contact the UID Fraud Division at 1-801-531-5380 or the Nationwide Customer Relations Department at 1-800-882-2822.

The Utah Insurance Department is a state agency whose mandate is to regulate insurance marketed and sold in Utah. Currently they license over 88,000 agents, agencies and insurers; audit domestic insurers to verify financial stability and compliance with insurance laws; take administrative actions against licensees found to be in violation of the insurance laws; take calls from consumers who have questions or complaints; and educate licensees and consumers regarding insurance. Visit our website at <http://www.insurance.utah.gov/> or call our toll free in-state number 1-800-439-3805 or local number 801-538-3077.