

More Fraud Warnings

Written by Steve Frank
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Area law enforcement agencies are urging the public to be cautious after a number of recent reports of fraud and scams in Watauga County. On Friday, a man reported to the Boone Police Department that he had been the victim of a fraud—one Boone Police identified as the "Nigerian check scam" fraud, saying he was contacted online in response to a Craigslist advertisement. The suspect purchased the item for sale with a check issued in an amount greater than the price of the item, with the seller asked to distribute the overage to three different locations via Western Union—two in the U.S. and one in Nigeria. As is usually the case, the seller later was contacted by his bank and told that the check to him was worthless. Police say financial institutions often hold customers responsible for money lost as a result of a scam, so caution is the word, and exchanging funds in a trustworthy, verifiable way.

The police department reminded residents that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Any promises of large sums of money by unknown people should be carefully scrutinized.

Avoid responding to:

- Any correspondence that offers money but requests that you pay a fee first.
- Any correspondence that offers a check and requests that you take a percentage and then use Western Union to send the remaining money somewhere else. The use of Western Union is common in these scams and should be a red flag.
- Any prize winnings from contests that you did not participate in and that request you pay postage and handling, other charges, or request banking information such as an account number in advance.
- If the person contacting you advises you against speaking with your bank, attorney or contacting the company they say they represent before fulfilling their request.
- If the contact is requesting that you assist them in getting money out of their country.
- If the contact is telling you that you are receiving an inheritance from someone you don't know.