Well-Known Sweepstakes Scam Popping Up Again

An old scam in which imposters claim to be from Publishers Clearing House is still making the rounds, and the FTC is warning consumers not to take the bait.

**How does this scam work?**

Scammers claiming to be from Publishers Clearing House call, send letters or email potential victims to tell them they have won the sweepstakes. All the "winner" has to do is pay the taxes or fees upfront to claim the prize. Usually, the imposter asks for the money to be wired. Once the victim sends the money, the scammer steals it.

Or, the criminals send out realistic-looking fake checks in the mail, and the recipient is told to deposit the check and send back part of the amount to cover phony fees. The check will bounce and the victim will be on the hook for the bank fees and the money sent to claim the fake prize.

**What if I’m a victim?**

Always report all scams and fraud to your local law enforcement agency's non-emergency number. If you believe someone is in danger, call 911. Report all scams and financial abuse to the state attorney general, and file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at ftc.gov/complaint.

**How do I protect myself?**

First of all, the real Publishers Clearing House will never ask a winner to pay a fee to collect a prize.

If you think you have won a prize or sweepstakes, the FTC urges you to take the following precautions. First, never send money to collect a prize, sweepstakes money or lottery winnings. If you have to pay, it is a scam. Second, never deposit a check and send back money, even if the funds appear in your account. That's a sure sign of a scam. Finally, if someone calls, emails or sends you a letter asking you to pay for a prize, report it to the FTC.