

ALERT 2000-13  
Subject: Counterfeit Official Checks  
Date: December 26, 2000

TO: Chief Executive Officers of All National Banks; All State Banking Authorities; Chairman, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System; Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation; Conference of State Bank Supervisors; Deputy Comptrollers (Districts); Assistant Deputy Comptrollers; District Counsel and Examining Personnel

RE: Counterfeit Bank Checks purporting to be for the distribution of lottery funds

Information has been received from Canadian and U. S. authorities of a scheme to steal money from people living in Canada and the United States operating primarily out of Montreal, Canada, at the present time. This scheme takes several variations, all of which supposedly relate to lottery winnings, misdirected payments, or recently discovered records of undistributed winnings from Canadian lotteries.

The basic scheme starts when the victim fills out a sweepstakes coupon for the Canadian lottery. The victims are then contacted and told that they have won several thousand dollars. Other contacts may tell them that they will receive a large payment due to some type of error, fraudulent activity, or mistake at the lottery headquarters. To receive the payment, the victim will usually be asked to send money in advance to pay taxes or other fees.

In one variation, the instructions provided to the victims, or accompanying the check, will direct the victims to deposit the check to their account and to then immediately send official bank checks for lesser amounts to one or more people or entities. These people and entities are usually located in countries outside of North America, not in well-known financial centers. The transfer instructions may cover two or more banks in the chain of distribution.

Banks should not issue any checks to anyone for any purpose related to these transactions. The incoming check is worthless and, in most cases, counterfeit. If there is a telephone number on the check to call for verification, do not rely on that phone number. It has been determined that, in most cases, the number printed on the check is a rented cell phone number, and is not a legitimate bank phone number. Verify the phone number for the bank through the telephone directory or the directory of financial institutions. If it is determined that the proposed transaction is fraudulent, all information regarding the situation and the actual check and the envelope it was mailed in should be turned over to appropriate law enforcement personnel.

Please have law enforcement forward the information through the local office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to Project Colt, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Montreal, Canada.

Any information which you may have concerning this matter should be brought to the attention of:

Mail Office of the Comptroller of the Currency  
Enforcement & Compliance Division  
250 E Street, SW, Washington, DC 20219  
Fax (202) 874-5301  
Internet <http://www.occ.treas.gov>  
E-mail [alertresponses@occ.treas.gov](mailto:alertresponses@occ.treas.gov)

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