



**California Department of Justice  
Attorney General Xavier Becerra**

## **Beware of Wire Fraud Scams**

### **Five Tips for Consumers:**

- 1 Be skeptical whenever you are told you've won a contest or the lottery you did not enter.** In Lottery or Contest Scams, consumers are told they have won large sums of money but must first wire fees or taxes to claim their winnings. Fraudsters often send victims a fake check with instructions to cash the check and then wire a portion of the cash back to the fraudster as a fee.
- 2 Be skeptical whenever a purported friend or family member asks for an emergency wire transfer but urges you not to tell anyone else about the emergency.** In Grandparent and Romance Scams, consumers are contacted by fraudsters posing as a friend, family member, or love interest claiming to be in trouble and in need of an emergency wire transfer. Common scenarios include medical emergencies, car accidents, and muggings.
- 3 Be aware that legitimate businesses will NEVER ask you to wire money.** In Phantom Debt Scams, fraudsters posing as law firms, debt collectors, or the government contact consumers and threaten a lawsuit or even arrest over fake debt unless the consumer immediately wires money they do not in fact owe.
- 4 Be aware that the government will NEVER ask you to wire money for any purpose.** In Government Relief Scams, fraudsters pose as the government and tell victims they are eligible for a government payout or restitution, but must first wire fees or taxes to receive their money.
- 5 Be skeptical whenever an unknown source requests a money transfer.** Ultimately, there are an infinite number of scenarios fraudsters may dream up to trick victims. Other common scams include mystery shopper offers, rental property offers, and get-rich-quick employment offers. These scams almost always require an up-front wire transfer of fees or taxes to take advantage of a too-good-to-be-true benefit.

Attorney General Becerra strongly encourages consumers to ignore such scams and report them to the Office's Public Inquiry Unit by calling (800) 952-5225 or submitting a complaint at: <http://oag.ca.gov/contact/consumer-complaint-against-business-or-company>