

From: All-nmsu <all-nmsu-bounces@nmsu.edu> **On Behalf Of** Norma Grijalva

Sent: Friday, March 1, 2019 10:00 AM

To: all-nmsu <all-nmsu@nmsu.edu>

Subject: Information Security Awareness Memo – Check Fraud Alert

To: NMSU Community

From: Norma Grijalva, ICT

Date: March 1, 2019

Subject: Information Security Awareness Memo – Check Fraud Alert

There is another scam hitting the NMSU community and the general community. Several have become victims of scams involving a fraudulent check, typically a cashier's check. A cashier's check is a check that is issued by a bank that is a direct obligation of the bank. Cashier's checks are viewed as relatively risk-free and are often used as a trusted form of payment to consumers for goods and services.

Lately cashier's checks lately have become a vehicle for fraud when used for payments to consumers. Although the amount of a cashier's check quickly becomes "available" for withdrawal after the check is deposited, these funds do not belong to the consumer if the check proves to be fraudulent. It may take weeks to discover that a cashier's check is fraudulent. In the meantime, the consumer may have wired the funds to a scam artist or otherwise used the funds – only to find out later, when the fraud is detected – that the consumer owes the bank the full amount of the check that had been deposited.

Below are some of the common methods and the individual is typically contacted through email, but it can also be done via phone call, letter or by clicking on a sketchy website.

- **Mystery shopping**—You receive a letter or other communication informing you that you have been chosen to act as a mystery shopper. The letter includes a cashier's check, and you are told to deposit the check into your account. You are told to use a portion of the funds to purchase merchandise at designated stores, transfer a portion of the funds to a third party using a designated wire service company, and keep the remainder. The cashier's check turns out to be fraudulent.
- **Selling goods**—You sell goods in the marketplace – for example, over the Internet. A buyer sends you a cashier's check for the price that you have agreed on, and you ship the goods to the buyer. The cashier's check turns out to be fraudulent.
- **Excess of purchase price**—This scenario is similar to the one described above. However, the buyer sends you a cashier's check for more than the purchase price and asks you to wire some or all of the excess to a third party. The buyer may explain that this procedure allows the buyer to satisfy its obligations to you and the third party with a single check. The cashier's check turns out to be fraudulent.
- **Unexpected windfall**—You receive a letter informing you that you have the right to receive a substantial sum of money. For example, the letter may state that you are the beneficiary of someone's estate. The letter will state that you have to pay a processing/transfer tax or fee before you receive the money, but a cashier's check will be enclosed to cover that fee. The letter will ask you to deposit the cashier's check into your account and wire the fee to a third party. The cashier's check turns out to be fraudulent.

Help us stop the fraudsters day by day by not responding to these attempts. Please send all suspected phishing emails to abuse@nmsu.edu.

For additional information on how wide spread this scam is, search for “fake check scams” in your favorite search engine.

For more security information go to <http://infosec.nmsu.edu/>.

We appreciate your vigilance as we continue to work together to battle those who are attempting to defraud others. If you need help, please contact the ICT help desk at helpdesk@nmsu.edu or (575) 646-1840.

As always you are welcome to email me directly at norma@nmsu.edu with any questions or concerns.

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