



Counterfeit Cashier's Check Alert – January 18, 2012

In the last few days, the credit union has received several inquiries regarding counterfeit Georgia's Own Credit Union Cashier's Checks. These checks are being used in a variety of scams in an attempt to gain excessive amounts of cash from unsuspecting consumers. Several scams include the following:

- **Work-at-Home/Secret Shopper Ads:** Perpetrators examine newspapers, websites, and online job postings offering small but fast employment. Generally, they will forward the unsuspecting consumer a counterfeit check and request that the amount over what was agreed, be returned in the form of a Western Union transfer.
- **Canadian Sweepstakes:** Consumers receive award letters stating they have won a sweepstakes requiring them to pay the taxes and insurance fees on the winnings before the funds are awarded.
- **Online Sales:** Consumers are sent counterfeit checks to pay for an item purchased online with a request that the over payment of funds be sent back to the purchaser.

Often times, these counterfeit items look very genuine and authentic. Georgia's Own encourages all consumers to follow the guidelines issued by the US Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to avoid becoming a victim of these scams.

What Can People Do to Avoid Becoming Victims of a Counterfeit Check/Money Order Scam?

The United States Department of Justice recommends that consumers and businesses take the following steps when someone whom they do not know personally sends them a check or money order to pay for goods or services:

1. If the check or money order is made out in an amount larger than the purchase price for the goods or services, or if you see any signs that the check or money order has been altered in any way (for example, the face amount or signature appears to have been erased or written over), do not deposit the check in your account under any circumstances. A legitimate buyer can provide you with a

check or money order in the exact amount of the purchase price. Depositing or cashing a counterfeit check, however, can result in a substantial loss to you.

2. Do not wire-transfer any funds from that check or money order back to a buyer if you do not know the buyer personally. If your financial institution or a law enforcement officer tells you that the check or money order you received is counterfeit, do not attempt to redeposit it in any way, as that may subject you to prosecution for check fraud.
3. If the sender of the check refuses to give you a check or money order for the exact amount of the purchase, and insists on sending you a check or money order for a higher amount, do not continue with the transaction. The only reason that someone would insist on sending you a check and requiring that you transfer a portion of the funds back to them is to commit fraud.
4. If you run a business that uses a substantial volume of checks, certain financial institutions offer a service that allows cleared checks to be matched against a data file of issued checks, to ensure that only matched entries are processed and that unmatched checks can be returned to the business rather than negotiated.

If you have received a check or money order that you have reason to believe may be counterfeit, you should retain the actual check or money order, and (if possible) the envelope in which it was mailed to you, in the event that a law enforcement agency may need the documents.

If you have questions regarding the validity of a Georgia's Own Cashier's Check, please contact our Member Services department at (404) 874-1166 / (800) 533-2062 or email the Security Department at security@georgiasown.org. Please include your full contact information when you inquire.

To report a fraudulent cashier's check to the federal government:

- Online Scams – Contact the Internet Crime Complaint Center
 - <http://www.ic3.gov>
- All other Scams (non-online):
 - Contact your local FBI office:
 - <http://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field>
 - Contact the Postal Inspection Service:
 - <https://ribbs.usps.gov/locators/find-is.cfm>
 - Contact the US Secret Service:
 - http://www.secretservice.gov/field_offices.shtml