

FRAUD ALERT

OIG information Bulletin No. 5

BEWARE OF TELEMARKETING FRAUD!

Telemarketing fraud comes in different forms; a telephone call in the middle of dinner, an e-mail to you at home or work, or “Junk” fax or mail.

The bottom-line for consumers is always the same: When you send money, or respond to questionable “offers” or provide personal or financial information, you increase your chances of becoming a victim of telemarketing fraud.

A recent memo sent to a Metro fax machine is an example of this type of fraud. The memo offers, for a limited time only, vacation packages at attractive rates. The packages offer a variety of “goodies” such as upgrades, meal plans, and free accommodations for your kids. You are advised to make contact via a toll-free number. When you call the toll-free number it directs you to another phone number. If you choose to call that number you are charged an exorbitant per-minute rate that is noted on your phone bill as international directory assistance. Numerous complaints have been filed with consumer protection agencies and telephone companies regarding this activity.

DON'T BECOME A VICTIM!

Telemarketing fraudsters use a variety of tactics to get your attention. Be on the look-out for the following warning signs:

- You must act “now” or the offer won’t be good.
- You’ve won a “free” gift, vacation, or prize, but you have to pay for “postage and handling” or other charges.
- You must send money, give a credit card or bank account number, or have a check picked up by courier. You may hear this before you have had a chance to consider the offer carefully.
- You are told you don’t need to check out the company or its offer with anyone. The scammers indicate you do not need to consult with anyone including your family, lawyer, accountant, local Better Business Bureau, or consumer protection agency.
- You are also told you don’t need any written information about the company and you don’t need to check references; you simply cannot “afford to miss this high-profit, no-risk offer!”

If you see or hear these or similar “selling points,” just say “No, thanks!”

