

Scam Alerts *to be aware of*

BY TAWANA NECOLE GIBBS

In the 21st Century, society has allowed technology to be its economical driving force. The downside of this evolution is the rapid pace at which the Internet continues to grow. It is reported by The Informant that in 1946, when the Army developed the Electronic Numerical Integrator and Calculator they had no idea that unauthorized access to computers (hacking), mischief to data (virus generation), theft of communications, copyright violations of computer software, and transmission of pornographic Website were going to impact society in such a negative way. In order to prevent and deter the problems associated with the World Wide Web, investigating and associating laws, consequences, and even punishment for the illegal crimes committed should be executed and implemented.

One of the most recent scams that have been reported by the FBI (<http://www.fbi.gov/cyberinvest/escams.htm>) is the Scheme Purportedly Announcing a Millionaire Contest; the circulation of a fraudulent e-mail, from The Oprah Winfrey Show, notifying recipients of their nomination for the "Oprah Millionaire Contest Show". To participate, recipients are requested to mail their contact information such as full name, address, telephone number, and e-mail

address; however, no mailing address is provided. Verified contestants are then required to purchase airfare and a ticket to attend The Oprah Winfrey Show, as well as complete a forthcoming contest form containing personal questions. The contestants are then promised a seat for The Oprah Winfrey Show in April and asked to provide their responses to the personal questions for a chance to win a million dollars.

The Fake Military Twist on Vehicle Sales is another easy scam to fall or become a prey to: victims find attractively priced vehicles advertised at different Internet classified ad sites. Most of the scams include some type of third-party vehicle protection program to ensure a safe transaction. After receiving convincing e-mails from the phony vehicle protection program, the victims are directed to send either the full payment, or a percentage of the payment, to the third-party agent via a wire payment service. No vehicles are delivered to the victims.

In a new twist, scammers are posing as members of the United States military. The fictitious military personnel in the scam have either been sent to a foreign country to improve military relations, or they need to sell a vehicle quickly and cheaply because of their upcoming deployment to either Iraq or Afghanistan.

The most common scams are the Work-At-Home Scams. Victims are often hired to "process payments," "transfer funds," or "re-ship products." These job scams involve the victims receiving and cashing fraudulent checks, transferring illegally obtained funds for the criminals, or receiving stolen merchandise and shipping it to the criminals.

Other victims sign up to be a "mystery shopper," receiving fraudulent checks with instructions to cash the checks and wire the funds to "test" a company's services. Victims are told they will be compensated with a portion of the merchandise or funds.