

Texas Lottery Commission Press Release - March 23, 2004

Contact:

Leticia Vasquez, 512-344-5208

Kristina Tirloni, 512-344-5411

Latin Lotto Scam Hits Houston And Plainview

(Austin, March 23) - Scam artists from Latin America are still at work across Texas trying to rob victims of money using phony Texas Lottery® tickets. Two incidents of the Latin Lotto Scam occurred yesterday in Houston and Plainview.

"These crooks are at it again," said Texas Lottery Commission Executive Director Reagan E. Greer. "They're moving around the state, targeting the most vulnerable members of our society, the elderly, promising them riches and stealing their money. Last month these con artists were working the Dallas metroplex. Now they've hit Houston again and Plainview. We urge all Texans to beware of anyone trying to sell them a Lottery ticket on the street."

In Houston, an elderly man was approached by a male in the parking lot of the Wal-Mart at Freeport and IH-10 in Houston asking for directions. Two others, a man and a woman, then approached to lend assistance, they claimed. The victim then gave the three individuals a ride to a nearby Fiesta grocery store.

On the way, the near-victim was asked if he wanted a share of a supposedly-winning Lottery ticket. The con artists even phoned the Lottery, they said, and allegedly spoke with someone who confirmed the bogus ticket as a winner. The person on the other end of the line told the driver that each of them needed to bring \$10,000 to claim the prize of \$200,000.

The near-victim told his scam artists that he didn't have \$10,000. They then asked him to leave them at the Fiesta and meet them again if he could come up with the money. He then called the Lottery to report the incident.

In Plainview, an elderly couple was not so lucky and lost \$2,300 from a credit card account. In the parking lot of a local grocery store, a male suspect and a woman suspect presented the victims with a Lottery ticket they claimed was worth \$200,000. The suspects accompanied the victims to the bank where they drew \$2,300 from a credit card account. Immediately after, the suspects switched the bag that held the money with another that contained newspaper clippings from a local paper and disappeared.

"In both these incidents, the crooks are using the same moves that are the classic signatures of the Latin Lotto Scam," Greer said. "In both cases, the victims and the near-victim were approached by individuals needing help, wanting a ride somewhere, brandishing a bogus Lottery ticket, and dialing a phone number that was allegedly answered by a Texas Lottery employee. You don't ever need to present any money upfront to claim a prize. My advice to anyone who wants a Texas Lottery ticket is to buy it from an authorized retailer. And, once again, if the deal sounds too good to be true, it usually is."

For more information about the Texas Lottery, please visit the official Texas Lottery Commission Web site at <http://www.txlottery.org>

...

"We urge all Texans to beware of anyone trying to sell them a Lottery ticket on the street."

The Facts

- No money is EVER required to claim a prize.
- The TLC NEVER confirms that a ticket is a winner over the phone.
- You don't have to be a U.S. citizen to claim a lottery prize.

Get More Information

- ▶ [How the Scam Works](#)
- ▶ [Who Runs the Scam](#)
- ▶ [More News Stories](#)