

Texas Lottery Commission Press Release - September 25, 2003

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Houston Woman Latest Victim Of Latin Lotto Scam

(Austin, September 25) - Texas Lottery Commission Executive Director Reagan E. Greer is warning the public that another incident of the Latin Lotto scam hit the Houston area yesterday. According to Greer, the Lottery's Security Division was notified of the incident by the Harris County Sheriff's Office.

"This is terrible," said Greer. "The woman was approached at a Wal-Mart parking lot and ended up losing \$9,900 in the scam."

Greer said that from what he's read in the law enforcement report, the case appears to be another incident of the Latin Lotto scam.

"It's so frustrating because we issued a warning back in August, when another woman in Houston was scammed out of \$5,000," said Greer. "Our message then was simple, 'Don't fall for it.' And now, another person has lost their hard earned money."

Greer is asking for the public's help in warning others.

"Tell a friend about the Latin Lotto scam," said Greer. "We need everyone to know that these scammers are out there, and if they're approached, they need to get away and call local law enforcement.

"I won't be satisfied until we drive these scammers out of the state," said Greer. "I don't want to see any more innocent people victimized by these con artists."

Greer noted that other incidents of the Latin Lotto scam have been reported recently in Garland, Slaton, Tahoka and Lubbock. Houston has been one of the hardest hit cities, with more than 200 cases reported.

Since the scam was first reported in Texas about four years ago, victims have lost more than \$3 million. It has been called the "Latin Lotto Scam" since law enforcement identified the ring of perpetrators as coming from Latin America. The scam has been reported in Florida and California, and law enforcement intelligence indicates that the same tactics and sometimes the same perpetrators are involved in each state.

The scam is usually perpetrated by at least three people and appears to target elderly Hispanics.

The first person approaches the target and claims to have a winning Texas Lottery ticket that he cannot cash in because he is not a U.S. resident and doesn't have the money to pay the taxes on the prize upfront. The victim is asked for cash and a ride to the Lottery claim center, in exchange for a share of the prize.

During this exchange, a second person approaches and appears to overhear the conversation.

The second person, who is part of the scam, wants in on the deal, but asks for proof that the ticket is real before putting in any money.

The first perpetrator then offers to call the Lottery. That call is answered by another member of the scam who pretends to be an employee of the Texas Lottery and confirms that the ticket is a winner.

Greer said that any one of these statements is a clue that the Latin Lotto scam is being run.

"The Texas Lottery never requires a player to pay money upfront to claim a prize," he said. "And there's no restriction on

someone who is not a U.S. citizen from claiming a prize."

Greer noted that the Lottery also doesn't confirm that a ticket is a winner over the phone.

The Most Common Tricks - and The Truth

| The Scam | The Truth |
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| "This is a winning ticket, but I need money to claim it. If you help me with the upfront money, I'll share the jackpot with you." | Once the ticket is bought, no money is EVER required to claim a prize. |
| "I can't cash in my winning Lottery ticket because I'm not a U.S. citizen." | You don't have to be a U.S. citizen to claim a lottery prize. |
| "Let's call the Lottery. They'll tell us this is a winning ticket." | We NEVER confirm that a ticket is a winner over the phone. The person on the phone is just a part of the scam. |
| "We need to hurry! I need to get back to my family - it's an emergency!" | The thieves are trying to rush you so you don't have time to think or call a family member or friend for advice or help. |

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