

Texas Lottery Commission Press Release - May 1, 2002

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## **Texas Lottery Commission Sponsors Seminar About Scams And Fraud Against The Elderly**

(Houston, May 1) - - The Texas Lottery Commission this week opened its series of law enforcement seminars regarding lottery-related fraud against the elderly here as part of the continuing "Latin Lotto Scam" public awareness campaign.

"This seminar helps local law enforcement better recognize offenses involving lottery tickets, and brings together diverse agencies to create better ways to share criminal information," said Texas Lottery Commission Executive Director Linda Cloud. "By holding seminars like this one, we can work hand-in-hand with local law enforcement to protect the elderly and get a better handle on these crimes."

At the training, Sergeant Marvin Collins of the Lottery's law enforcement division provided an overview of how the agency investigates and prosecutes cases.

Detectives Mike Garrett and J. R. Dees of the Houston Police Department Major Offenders Division made presentations on swindle crimes and the psychology of these offenses, as well as the prosecution of suspects involved in the scam. They also addressed how investigations are handled and what kind of evidence to look for.

Detective Armando Garza of the Pearland Police made a presentation on the arrest and interrogation of three suspects he apprehended in July of 2001.

Since the first cases of the "Latin Lotto Scam" were reported three years ago, it is estimated that victims have lost \$3 million.

The con artists are generally from Central and South America. They approach victims, mostly elderly Hispanics, in the parking lots of large shopping centers or grocery stores and ask for help to cash what they claim is a winning lottery ticket.

The Lottery has held news conferences together with police personnel in Houston, Dallas, San Antonio and Lubbock to increase awareness of the scam.

Other seminars are scheduled for San Antonio, Dallas and El Paso.