

Texas Lottery Commission Press Release - April 14, 2005

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Texas Lottery® Warns Houston-Area Residents Latin *Lotto* Scam On The Rise Again

(Austin, April 14) - A woman in the Bellaire area of Houston lost \$9,800 to two Hispanic females who sold a supposed "winning" Texas Lottery® ticket to her claiming they couldn't redeem the prize because they were not American citizens.

The incident occurred in the parking lot of a grocery store located at Bellaire Boulevard and South Rice.

"The crooks are back and scamming innocent citizens with phony lottery tickets and bogus sob stories about not being able to claim their alleged prizes," said Texas Lottery Commission Executive Director Reagan E. Greer. "Houston always seems to get hit hardest and citizens should be on notice that these con artists are out there and waiting to make an easy buck."

Greer said there are several key points to remember when someone approaches attempting to sell a Texas Lottery ticket that allegedly carries a prize.

"Don't believe them if they tell you they can't claim the prize because they are from another country," Greer said. "You don't have to be a U.S. citizen to claim a prize. Also, never believe them when they tell you they need cash to claim a Lottery prize. You never have to pay money to claim a Lottery prize. Get away from the con artists as quickly as you can, don't give them money, and don't get into a car with them."

The perpetrators often try to have their victim drive them to a bank.

The scam is usually perpetrated by at least three people and targets elderly Hispanics. The incident in Bellaire may have included four people, according local law enforcement.

Con artists look for victims in the parking lots of a mall, a grocery store or a so-called "big-box" store with a high volume of traffic.

"If you suspect that you or someone you know has been approached by these scam artists, call the police immediately and warn those around you," Greer said. "If a stranger's story sounds too good to be true, it's because it is. For those people interested

in having a Texas Lottery ticket, the place to get one is from an authorized retailer, not someone on the street with a sad-sack story who says they need money right then and there."

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

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