

Texas Lottery Commission Press Release - July 15, 2004

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Latin *Lotto* Scam Suspects Nabbed In Freeport

(Austin, July 15) - Two suspects of Latin American origin were apprehended today in Freeport by local police when the two were caught attempting to con someone out of money using a phony Texas Lottery® ticket.

"On behalf of myself and the Texas Lottery Commission, I want to express my appreciation and gratitude to the members of the Freeport Police Department for their hard work in this case," said Texas Lottery Commission Executive Director Reagan E. Greer. "In the last few weeks, we've been notified of cases in North Texas and the Houston area. The suspects today, I'm told, match the descriptions given in other recent cases, which is great because it means we have at least two of these crooks off the street."

The suspects are a Hispanic male, 45 years of age, 5'-6" to 5'-8", heavy set with a dark complexion, and a Hispanic female, 30 years of age, 5'2" to 5'4."

Earlier this week, a woman in Fort Worth, who says she was born in 1975, lost \$5,000 after being approached by con artists in the parking lot of a clothing store in the 28th Street and Azle Avenue area. What's unusual about her case is that victims are usually elderly.

An elderly man in Houston lost \$3,000 on Tuesday by a Bank One in the Bellaire area. On Monday, a 57-year-old woman lost \$10,000 near the Marshall's store on Hollister.

On July 8, a 57-year-old victim lost \$14,000 after being approached in the parking lot of a Kroger's grocery store located on 43rd Street in Houston. A 72-year-old victim in the Dallas-Oak Cliff area lost \$14,500 on June 30, after meeting the suspects in the parking lot of an Albertson's grocery store.

"I can't stress strongly enough how important it is to remember never to buy a lottery ticket from someone on the street," said Greer. "The other thing equally important to remember is never to fall for that line the con artists use about not being able to claim a lottery ticket because they're from another country or an undocumented alien. So long as a person can prove that they are who they say they are, we will give them their winnings."

Since the scam was first reported in Texas five years ago, victims have lost well over \$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 apprehension today of these suspects isn't the only good news, however," Greer said. "Several weeks ago, a woman was approached near a Big Lots store in the area of Highway 6 before 290 in Houston. Even though she withdrew money from her bank, she told the scammers that she needed to go to another bank and went home to call the Lottery. She managed to trick them and kept her money."

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