

Texas Lottery Commission Press Release - February 6, 2004

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Latin Lotto Scam Artists Strike Again, Leave Mesquite Woman Minus \$3,000

(Austin, February 6) - A Mesquite woman told Texas Lottery Commission officials that she was robbed of \$3,000 by scam artists claiming they could not cash a supposed winning Texas Lottery® ticket because they were illegal aliens.

"There's no let-up with these thieves," said Texas Lottery Commission Executive Director Reagan E. Greer. "They'll say anything to con you out of your money. The fact is that you don't have to be an American citizen to get a real Texas Lottery winning ticket cashed.

"This incident shows that the scam is still hot, and that you should only buy your lottery tickets from a licensed lottery retailer."

According to Lottery security division personnel, the most recent incident occurred in the parking lot of a Shop N Save in Mesquite on Monday. Greer noted that other incidents of the Latin Lotto scam have been reported in the last 12 months in Garland, Slaton, Tahoka, Houston, Lubbock and Sugarland.

Since the scam was first reported in Texas nearly five 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.

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

"This woman did the right thing by calling the Lottery Commission to report the crime," said Greer. "We need everyone to know that these scammers are out there, and that if they're approached, they need to get away and call us or their local law enforcement agency. I won't be satisfied until we drive these scammers out of the state.

"People should also remember that these thieves will do or say anything to grab the victim's sympathy. If it sounds too good to be true, it's because it probably is. These thieves will tell you that they need your help to claim a lottery prize, but don't fall for it."

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

". . . sometimes the same perpetrators are involved . . ."

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.

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