



## RIVER FOREST CRIME ALERT

The River Forest Police Department would like to make residents aware of common lottery, beneficiary or sweepstakes scams that are often perpetrated via the U.S. Mail or the internet.

Typically an email, letter or text message from an overseas lottery or sweepstakes company arrives as an official looking typed letter or e-mail. It will advise you that you have won a large sum of money or fantastic prizes, in a lottery or sweepstakes competition, that you did not enter. It could also say that you are a beneficiary of an estate involving a large sum of money.

These scams will often use the name of legitimate overseas lotteries (often Spanish lotteries), so that even if you do some superficial research, the scam may seem real. Of course, **it is impossible for you to win these lotteries if you have not bought a ticket** from an authorized distributor in Spain. Some other names that scammers will often use are the International Lotto Commission and the Princess Diana Lottery, among others.

Regardless of the pretense for the scam, the email, letter or text message you receive about your winnings will ask you to respond quickly or risk missing out. The scammers do this to try and make you react without thinking. Winning a large sum of money is highly emotional and causes you to want to believe it to be true. You could also be urged to keep your winnings private or confidential, to 'maintain security' or to stop other people from getting your 'prize' by mistake.

Here is the scam. **You will be asked to pay some fees to release your winnings.** Scammers will often say these fees are for insurance costs, government taxes, bank fees, or courier charges. The scammers steal money by continually collecting these 'fees' from you and stalling the payment of your 'winnings'. **You will lose** all the money you pay to the scammers. You may also be asked to provide personal details to 'prove' that you are the correct winner by giving your bank account details so the prize can be sent to you. The scammer will use these details to try to misuse your identity and steal any money you have in your bank account. Sometimes the scammers actually do send a check for part of your 'winnings' (a few thousand dollars perhaps). This check will eventually bounce but you may have already sent money to the scammers in the meantime.

The old adage "***If it is too good to be true, it probably is...***" always applies when someone offers you a large sum of money in exchange for your sending money first.

Please call the non-emergency phone number, 708-366-7125, if you need to speak with an officer about this Alert or any other police related matters.