



# Crime Prevention Tips

ARAPAHOE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
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Crime  
Prevention  
Section

Committed to quality service with an emphasis on integrity,  
professionalism and community spirit.

## TELEPHONE AND MAIL FRAUD

Phone and mail fraud typically involve a large number of victims by making use of mass marketing techniques. They clone legitimate enterprises, and tend to target the victims in the system until their money is exhausted. The variety of telemarketing cons is endless. The most common, and therefore most dangerous, of these schemes are summarized below:

- **Prize Solicitations**

Victims are informed by postcard or phone that they have won one of three or four prizes as some sort of promotional offering. The caller will not specify the prize, but it will be represented as something of extraordinary value such as a car, cash, or jewelry. Victims are told that to collect their prize they have to send money for handling, taxes, shipping, and accounting fees. If any prize is eventually received, it is always worth less than the processing money.

- **Prize Recovery**

This is a reload scheme in which victims are told that the prize they won the past was never delivered because the firm that awarded it to them has gone out of business. The good news is that they did win a prize and this has been seized by the new company. It can now be delivered if the new firm is reimbursed for the shipping and handling costs incurred when the prize was transferred. No prize ever existed or will exist.

- **Sweepstakes and Contest Scams**

Victims are enticed to enter a contest with the promise they can easily win a new car or other valuable prize. All they have to do is complete a puzzle or fill in blanks answering a few questions and send in a sum of money. If they answer correctly, they are told they will advance to a higher level. In reality there is no contest and no worthwhile prize. Victims are simply tricked into completing an endless series of puzzles; most of them require some sort of entry fee to advance to the next level. Victims can invest thousands of dollars per year in this manner. Investigate sweepstakes and contests carefully to make sure that it is legitimate and not a diversion to sway you into unknowingly signing off to a scam.

- **Charity And Affinity Scams**

These usually involve calls from strangers asking for donations for causes that relate to the potential victims race, ate, national origin or religion. Some may be legitimate, but all should be carefully investigated before contributing anything. If you are not sure, do not feel guilty about saying no.

- **Investments such as Land, Oil/Gas, and Business Opportunities**

Prospective victims are contacted with all types of offers, all of them promising immediate returns and big profits for investments.

- **Mail Fraud**

Common characteristics of mail fraud scams to be on the watch for:

- Chain letters – Send money now.
- Mail order correspondence courses.
- Unordered merchandise, Recurring frauds such as Canadian gemstones.
- Foreign lotteries.
- Debt consolidation, credit card repairs and loans.
- Health club memberships.
- Miracle medical cures. Weight-loss and body enhancing products.

Your best protection in any questionable situation is to investigate the details carefully. The Better Business bureau and the Attorney General’s Office can provide you with the necessary information. Always beware of unsolicited offers. Avoid hasty decisions. Take the time to thoroughly read, discuss and understand any paperwork you sign. Criminal fraud is often hard to detect so caution should always be exercised. Also, if you notice or are approached by someone promoting any of these “opportunities,” immediately report them to your local law enforcement agency.

AARP (2004). *2005 Consumer Fraud kit*. Washington DC:



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