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BBB Warns Against New E-mail Scam

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) of Eastern North Carolina warns consumers to be leery of a recent scam blending job opportunities and government economic stimulus checks.

/24-7PressRelease/ - RALEIGH, NC, June 19, 2008 — The Better Business Bureau (BBB) of Eastern North Carolina warns consumers to approach enticing job offers cautiously. Recent complaints have surfaced regarding e-mail scams blending job opportunities and economic stimulus checks being distributed by the government.

In the June 2008 consumer alerts, BBB counsels consumers that they could potentially receive an e-mail from someone inviting them to become a distributor for flat screen televisions. When the consumer responds, the scammer claims to work for the U.S. government and states that this is part of the new "Stimulus Program." The consumer then receives a fraudulent check that looks exactly like a U.S. Treasury refund check, with instructions to cash the check, keep a portion for set-up and wire the rest back to the sender.

"Consumers should be wary of any business opportunity received through e-mail or other means which requires the recipient to cash a check and then wire funds back," says Beverly Baskin, president and CEO of the BBB of Eastern North Carolina.

Consumers should be cautious of business opportunities advertised through e-mail, and any that require such outlandish activities in order to "receive" anything. Visit bbb.org for more information.

About BBB of Eastern North Carolina:

The Better Business Bureau of Eastern North Carolina is a 501 (c)(6) not-for-profit corporation serving 33 counties in Eastern North Carolina. The organization is funded primarily by BBB Accredited Business fees from more than 3,200 local business and professional firms. The BBB promotes integrity, consumer confidence and business ethics through business self-regulation in the local marketplace. Services provided by the BBB include, reports on companies and charitable organizations, general monitoring of advertising in the marketplace, dispute resolution services, and consumer/business education programs. All services are provided at no cost to the public, with the occasional exception of mediation and arbitration. Visit bbb.org.

CONSUMER ALERTS FOR JUNE 2008

In an effort to keep the media and public informed, the Better Business Bureau of Eastern North Carolina offers monthly BBB Consumer Alerts as potential story or interview ideas. Readers should take into consideration the importance of the practice in question and the total performance of a company. This list is current as of release date. Information regarding business or consumer topics reported here can be obtained through the BBB office by contacting info@raleigh.bbb.org.

Counterfeit U.S. Treasury checks are arriving in mailboxes. The scam works like this: A consumer gets an e-mail from someone inviting them to become a distributor for flat screen TVs. If the consumer responds, the sender of the e-mail (the scammer) claims to work for the U.S. government and claims that this is all part of the "Stimulus Program." He is even going to send a check to help get things set up. The check, usually written for around \$8,900, looks just like a U.S. Treasury refund check. The consumer is instructed to cash the check, deposit most of it, keep some for set-up and wire the rest back to the "U.S. government official." The check is counterfeit! Don't fall for this crazy scam!

St. Matthews Church (not to be confused with actual local churches by the same name) sent out another mass mailing, including the "anointed prayer rug." This organization has chosen not to make available complete annual financial statements, nor has it provided an annual report that includes mission, programs, officers and board. The church annually sends millions of pieces of religious mail nationwide. The mailing indicates the ministry of the church will pray for individuals

who send their offerings. St. Matthews Church is not a recognized charity.

Icon Marketing appears to be going through neighborhoods looking for signs indicating the home is protected by a security company. The Icon representative approaches residents stating he is with the homeowner's current alarm company and wants to "update" the system. One consumer agreed, and then later found she had unknowingly switched her service to Icon. This Utah company has the BBB's lowest rating.

Better Trades.com advertises on TV, inviting consumers to free seminars that will help them to trade in the stock market without risk. The company actually sells online trading workshops. Complainants allege selling practice misrepresentation. This Las Vegas company has an unsatisfactory record with the BBB.

Physical Enhancement Labs sells products online under names such as Hoodia Fusion, Diet Pills USA and C & F Fulfillment Center. When one consumer took advantage of their "free trial offer," she received the product but also a bill for the full price. This seems to be a common practice with this company. More than 940 complaints (approximately 450 in the past year) have been filed against this Oklahoma City company, and they have an unsatisfactory record with the BBB.

Longwood Industries offers auto Internet advertising. When a consumer placed an ad in a newspaper to sell her car, Longwood called her and offered to list her car on their Web site for \$150. The consumer called the BBB first and found out this Virginia company has an unsatisfactory rating with the BBB. More than 100 complaints have been filled against the company, with most involving failure to honor their money-back guarantee.

Free Medicine Direct provides information on how consumers can apply to pharmaceutical companies for free prescription drugs. The fee for this service is \$199. Most of the 160 plus complaints filed through the BBB against this Florida company involve refund issues and selling practices. Free Medicine has the BBB's lowest rating. Consumers meeting certain financial criteria may obtain free prescriptions through drug manufacturers.

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