

# Consumer Alert

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: October 10, 2008



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## County of Summit Office of Consumer Affairs Warns Consumers to Beware of Sweepstakes & Foreign Lottery Scams

Summit County residents are becoming victims of sweepstakes or foreign lottery scams. Many are receiving authentic looking checks in the mail along with letters claiming that they have won a sweepstakes or foreign lottery, only to discover later that the checks and the sweepstakes are phony. Others are receiving calls stating that they are part of an investigation into a sweepstakes or lottery scam. "Many consumers are facing some of their most difficult financial times right now and winning a sweepstakes would be a dream come true. Unfortunately for too many Summit County residents, it turns into a nightmare," said Cynthia Sich, Director of the Summit County Office of Consumer Affairs.

With these scams, consumers are told to deposit their checks through an ATM machine and quickly wire "processing fees" back, or else they may lose their winnings. This is just a scare tactic scam artists use to steal your money. In reality, they are just trying to avoid having the bank warn the consumer about these phony checks.

### **Tips to avoid becoming a victim of these scams**

- **NEVER** deposit a check you have received in the mail from someone you do not know through your bank's ATM regardless of what they tell you in the letter or by telephone.
- **NEVER** wire or send money to anyone you do not know.
- **Beware** of any sweepstakes or lottery that asks you to pay for your winnings.
- **Remember**, even though you can cash a check, that does not mean the check is real. It can take the bank up to 15 days or more before they know if it is a fake. You should know that if you spend any money from a fake check then you are responsible for paying back all of the money.

For more information on this or to file a complaint, please contact the Office of Consumer Affairs at 330-643-2879, or visit our website at [www.co.summit.oh.us/conaffairs.htm](http://www.co.summit.oh.us/conaffairs.htm)