



Mystery Shopper Scam



How does the crime take place?

A potential victim is sent a solicitation via mail, text or email asking the consumer to evaluate their retail experience, products and services at stores. After responding to the ad, the consumer receives an "employment packet" containing a training assignment, a list of products to purchase at various stores and a realistic looking check often for \$2,000 to \$4,000.



The "training assignment" is for the consumer to deposit the check into the consumer's bank account, purchase the items on the Shopping List and then use a wire transfer service to send the balance of the check's proceeds, after the consumer finishes shopping, to an address outside of the US, often in Canada. The check that the consumer deposited in their account is counterfeit, a fact unbeknownst to the consumer. The balance of money sent to the fraudster is real and the consumer is now out that money and is liable for any and all penalties associated with the bounced check.

Tips

Should you receive an email soliciting you to become a "Secret Shopper:"

- Don't open or respond to unsolicited e-mails asking you to become a mystery or secret shopper.
- Never deposit a check you receive in the mail from a "mystery shopping" company. No legitimate business will pay in advance and ask you to send a portion of the money back.
- If you have posted your resume to an online job site, verify with the site any job solicitations you receive.
- Don't click on or respond to online ads or Web sites offering free gift cards.
- Remember, if it sounds too good to believe, it is!