

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

**For further information call:**

Postal Inspection Service Fraud Hotline - 1-800-372-8347

<http://www.usps.com/postalinspectors>

December 7, 2004

*Don't let the lure of a quick buck cost you big bucks.*

### **Foreign scams target U.S. residents with counterfeit postal money orders**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A fraud scheme speeding across the Internet may cost U.S. residents time, money and a not-so-pleasant chat with bank and law enforcement officials for passing counterfeit postal money orders.

According to U.S. Postal Inspectors, the scam begins when someone needing help to cash phony postal money orders contacts a victim by e-mail, through an Internet chat room or on-line auction site. Once the bogus money orders are cashed, the victim returns the funds via wire transfer, often unaware they have assisted in a federal crime.

Victims are told they can keep some of the money as a gift or payment for their help, officials said. Unsuspecting victims provide their home mailing address to the scam artist – who U.S. Postal Inspectors call “fraudsters” – and are told they will receive a check or postal money order that they should deposit into their own bank account.

“Scams promising quick and easy money are cast by fraudsters,” said Chief Postal Inspector Lee Heath. “These scam artists can easily connect to a sea of strangers through the Internet and dangle promising treats, hoping someone will bite.”

“Don’t take the bait,” Heath added.

Such scams can be coordinated from anywhere in the world, but recently many have been conducted from Nigeria.

“This is another example of our commitment to protecting the mail and our fellow Americans,” said Heath. “Their security is our mission.”

For more information about postal money order security features, visit the U.S. Postal Service Web site at <http://www.usps.com/missingmoneyorders/security.htm>

To report a fraud complaint, call the Fraud Complaint Hotline at 1-800-372-8347 or visit the U.S. Postal Inspection Service Web site at [www.usps.com/postalinspectors](http://www.usps.com/postalinspectors).