

UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 7, 2005

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usps.com/postalinspectors/

Work-at-Home Scams: They Just Don't Pay!
National Consumer Protection Week is February 6 – 12

Washington, DC — “Make big \$\$\$ working from home. Earn \$50 to \$200 /hour in the comfort of your home!” You’ve seen the ads in newspapers, on flyers stapled to telephone poles, and on the Internet. They sound great. In fact, working at home has become more attractive than ever as stay-at-home moms, college students, and retirees look for new ways to earn extra money. But be wary of these offers, warn U.S. Postal Inspectors. There are some genuine job opportunities, but too many don’t deliver on their promises.

During National Consumer Protection Week, Postal Inspectors and the Postal Service’s Consumer Advocate are joining other federal, state, and local consumer-protection agencies to educate the public about ways to avoid becoming victims of fraud. This year’s postal message is “Work-at-Home Scams: They Just Don’t Pay.”

Chief Postal Inspector Lee R. Heath says, “With so many Americans interested in working at home, it should come as no surprise that job scams have grown in popularity—but too many offers not only don’t pay, they cost victims thousands of dollars.”

According to the Postal Service’s Consumer Advocate Mike Spates, job seekers should do some homework before accepting a work-at-home offer. “Our goal is to educate consumers so we can reduce their chances of falling victim to work-at-home scams,” says Spates.

Postal Inspectors report the most common work-at-home scam is envelope stuffing. The ads promise you money in return for stuffing envelopes at home. But Postal Inspectors say that none of the promotions they’ve seen pay off as promised.

The newest scam is reshipping fraud. Work-at-home shippers are promised substantial amounts of money — all they have to do is receive, repackage, and then mail merchandise to a foreign address. What the shipper doesn’t know is that the merchandise was paid for with stolen credit cards. In effect, the work-at-home shipper becomes part of a fencing operation by receiving and mailing stolen goods. Reports to date indicate the scam has cost victims thousands of dollars, but as long as the ads appear, people unaware of the fraud continue to respond.



Other work-at-home jobs may involve product assembly, craft work, and multi-level marketing. Some ask victims to front money for products or more detailed instructions. Others require that you recruit other people to do the work — which continues the fraud.

Postal Inspectors encourage consumers to closely examine offers before responding. They offer these protection tips:

- Don't give out personal information to a person or company you don't know.
- Be suspicious of any offer that doesn't pay a regular salary or involves an overseas company.
- Check out the company with the Federal Trade Commission, the Better Business Bureau, state Attorney General, or your local consumer protection agency.

"Be smart," says Chief Inspector Heath. "There is no easy way to wealth. If the offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

For more than 225 years, the U.S. Mail has been one of the safest and most efficient ways for Americans to do business. The Postal Inspection Service works to maintain that trust. Last year, the Postal Inspection Service received 82,000 complaints from people who believed they were defrauded by offers received in the mail. During the same period, Postal Inspectors arrested 1,446 suspects for mail fraud.

For more information on fraud or to order the free DVD, "Work at Home Scams," visit www.usps.com/postalinspectors. For more information on National Consumer Protection Week, visit www.consumer.gov/ncpw and www.bbb.org.