



**OREGON DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
**JOHN KROGER**



ATTORNEY GENERAL'S

# SCAM ALERT

A Consumer Protection Alert from Oregon Attorney General John Kroger

Consumer Protection Hotline: 1-877-877-9392

Online: [www.oregonattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.oregonattorneygeneral.gov)

**NEW!** Look up consumer complaints about businesses online: [www.oregonattorneygeneral.gov/beinformed](http://www.oregonattorneygeneral.gov/beinformed)

## "BEWARE BOGUS SWEEPSTAKES LETTERS"

Attorney General John Kroger is warning Oregonians not to respond to an unsolicited "sweepstakes" letter claiming that the recipient has "won" money and only needs to pay a small fee to obtain it. The Department of Justice Consumer Hotline has received calls inquiring about a letter from the "Data Release Division" based in Jericho, New York. The letter claims to be a "guaranteed sweepstakes award," notifying the recipient they have won \$1.4 million. In reality, this letter is a deceptive solicitation that seeks money from unsuspecting Oregon consumers.

The Department of Justice has sent a letter to the "Data Release Division" ordering the company to cease mailing this deceptive letter to Oregon consumers or face sanctions for violating Oregon's the Unlawful Trade Practices Act.

Bogus sweepstakes and lottery offers are among the most common scams that seek to rip off consumers. In 2009, more than 1,000 Oregon consumers reported losing in excess of \$700,000 to

sweepstakes, lottery and other scams.

Attorney General Kroger offers the following advice regarding unsolicited telephone calls, mail or e-mail claiming that the recipient won a sweepstakes or lottery:

- Participating in a foreign lottery is illegal. Often these schemes are closely tied to organized crime.
- Never pay-to-play in a sweepstakes.
- Beware of fake organizations using similar names to more well-known groups in an attempt to trick consumers.
- Government agencies do not sponsor sweepstakes.
- Never wire money to receive a prize. Con artists frequently send victims fake checks as a "first down-payment" of their winnings, asking that a percentage be wired back under the misrepresentation that it will be used to "pay taxes" associated with the "winnings." These fake checks can sit in one's checking account for up to a week before ultimately bouncing.
- Beware of requests for income, credit card ownership, or bank accounts as a condition of participating in the sweepstakes or lottery.
- Do not participate in sweepstakes, or respond to advertisements, that resemble a check, bill, or invoice.

The Oregon Department of Justice Consumer Hotline, 1-877-877-9392, is a free resource for all Oregonians with consumer questions, concerns or complaints. If consumers receive fake sweepstakes or lottery offers please shred or delete the offer. If you or someone you know has fallen victim to a sweepstakes or lottery scam, please contact the Consumer Hotline for assistance.