



HUMBOLDT COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
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**NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: July 30, 2014

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On July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the Humboldt County District Attorney's Office received a call from a citizen reporting a suspicious checking transaction. The reporting citizen relayed that he had attempted to sell used tires on the website "Craigslis.org". The seller was contacted by a buyer who agreed to purchase the tires at the asking price. The buyer advised the seller that he would make the payment via personal check, and after payment was cleared, the buyer would pick up the tires. A check was received by the seller for the tires, but had a value greater than the agreed upon purchase price. The seller contacted the buyer to inquire about the discrepancy. The buyer suggested the seller refund the overpayment upon transfer of the tires. Ultimately, the check was determined to be a fictitious draft.

Although there are many variations similar to this scheme, citizens should remember to protect themselves from potential fraud as this citizen did. Common variations of this scheme may include fictitious "Pay Pal" accounts set up in such a way as to confuse the seller into sending the goods prior to the payment being received. In some instances, the payment provided is written on stolen checkbooks or, as in this case, is a completely fictitious document.

In this particular incident, the buyer attempted to cause the seller to cash a fictitious check. Should the transaction be completed by the financial institution, the buyer keeps the proceeds (which in this case could have included refunded overage payment) and the seller (if detected at a later date) is suspected of committing fraud. If the transactions are recognized by the financial institution as fraudulent, again the seller is suspected of committing fraud, and the buyer may walk away undetected.

When conducting transactions in this manner, please take steps to protect yourself from fraud. If you receive a payment for goods that is above what is expected, please treat this transaction with the appropriate level of scrutiny. Should you become victim to a fraud, please contact your local authorities or the Humboldt County District Attorney Fraud Hotline at 1-800-962-8261.