



## Protecting Yourself

Counterfeit checks are on the rise. Don't accept third-party checks and insist on a cashier's check for the exact amount owed on all merchandise purchases or payment for services. Be vigilant and not too trusting of persons you do not know.

If you're selling something, don't accept a check for more than the selling price, no matter how tempting the offer or how convincing the story. Ask the buyer to write the check for the correct amount. If the buyer refuses to send the correct amount, return the check. Don't send the merchandise.

If the buyer insists that you wire back funds, end the transaction immediately. Legitimate buyers don't pressure you to send money by wire transfer services. In addition, you have little recourse if there's a problem with a wire transaction.

Resist any pressure to "act now." If the buyer's offer is good now, it should be good after the check clears.

## **The bank accepted the deposit – so isn't it their problem if the check turns out to be fake?**

No, you are responsible for the checks you deposit, because you deal directly with the person who gave you the check. If the check bounces, you owe the bank the money you withdrew. A bank may sue you to recover the money and law enforcement may also get involved if they believe you were involved in the scam.

**Don't deposit a check and wire money back.** Under federal law, banks have to make the funds you deposit available within 1 – 5 days, depending on the type of check. It can take weeks for the forgery to be discovered and the check to bounce. If a check you deposit turns out to be a fake, you're responsible for repaying the bank.

## If You Think You're a Victim

**If you think you've been targeted by a counterfeit check scam, report it to the following agencies:**

The Federal Trade Commission [www.ftc.gov/complaint](http://www.ftc.gov/complaint)

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service <https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov>

Your state or local consumer protection agencies. Visit <http://www.naag.org> for a list of state Attorneys General.