



Office of the
Comptroller of the Currency

SAFE MONEY

GUARDING AGAINST FINANCIAL FRAUDS & SCAMS

CHECK FRAUD

Check fraud involves the unauthorized use of a person's checks.

An unauthorized person uses someone else's checks, or images of a check, to make unauthorized purchases or withdrawals.

SAFE MONEY is a series of informational sheets developed by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) to help consumers recognize and avoid common financial frauds and scams.

RED FLAGS

-  **Unfamiliar transactions** on checking account appear on bank statements.
-  **Bank notifications** of unauthorized account activity.
-  **Calls from a bank** about checks you didn't write or transactions you didn't make.
-  **Unsolicited request to deposit a check** for any reason, especially to make money on a limited time offer of any kind.
-  **Unexpected check received in the mail** related to employment as a mystery shopper, personal assistant, or for being the winner of a prize.





FRAUD METHODS

- Check Fraud:** Scammers steal or forge checks to make unauthorized transactions.
- Check Washing:** Fraudsters alter or “wash” legitimate checks with chemicals to erase the ink and rewrite amounts and payees.
- Mail Fraud:** Defrauding others by sending or receiving fraudulent checks through the mail.

AVOID FRAUD

Monitor Financial Accounts Regularly

- Set up account alerts for all transactions and review statements frequently for unauthorized charges or unusual and suspicious activity.

Use Black Gel Ink

- Black gel ink is highly resistant to check washing, a common scheme where chemicals are used to erase ink from a check to rewrite amounts and payees.

Retrieve Mail Promptly

- Get mail soon after delivery and avoid leaving it in a mailbox overnight.
- When sending checks, consider using letter slots in local post office to send mail.

Be Wary Sending Money

- Scammers often claim overpayment or demand you send or wire money after they give you a bad check.
- Use caution sending money or any medium of payment to someone after taking a check from them for any reason.

REPORT FRAUD

Taking prompt and comprehensive action when faced with check fraud can help mitigate any potential damage and ensure that the fraudulent charges are resolved effectively.

Always remain vigilant and proactive in protecting financial information.

Notify Financial Institution

- Inform your bank about the fraudulent transaction. Dispute any unauthorized charges and consider requesting to close your account and opening a new account.

Contact the Internet Crime Complaint Center

- Submit a complaint to the [IC3](#), a division of the FBI.

Contact the Federal Trade Commission

- Visit the FTC's [IdentityTheft.gov](#) to report the theft and create a recovery plan; or call 877-438-4338.

Report to U.S. Postal Inspection Service

- Report mail-related scams to [USPIS](#) or 877-876-2455.

File a Police Report

- Contact or visit local your law enforcement agency to file a report with all relevant information and documentation.
- Retain a copy of the report for your records and to provide to your financial institutions and credit bureaus.



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Promoting a Safe, Sound, and Fair Federal Banking System



The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency's (OCC) mission is to ensure that national banks and federal savings associations operate in a safe and sound manner, provide fair access to financial services, treat customers fairly, and comply with applicable laws and regulations.