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CITIZEN ALERT: Beware of Craigslist Overpayment Scams

April 14, 2011 – The Cambridge Police Department Electronic Crime Unit has recently seen an increase in the number of Fraud incidents involving overpayment scams using the popular website Craigslist and would like to alert residents to take extra caution when responding to posts on the site.

These scams typically originate with an individual responding to an item for sale or a rental property. The seller will generally receive a check, via FedEx, UPS or USPS Express Mail and will be for an amount far greater than the purchase price of the item.

The buyer will often inform the seller to keep some of the extra money for the inconvenience and then wire the remainder via Western Union or Money Gram to a third party for “moving” expenses. Once the check is deposited into the victim’s bank account it is generally returned due to being a fraudulent check.

Before sending any money via Western Union/MoneyGram for a check you received for an amount greater than the price of the item that you are selling, think twice.

Questions can be directed to Detective Brian O’Connor of the Criminal Investigations Section –Financial & Computer Crimes at 617-349-9307.

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