

From the Desk of Detective Dave

Craigslist Scams

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If you've ever posted anything for sale on Craigslist you've likely received a text message or email inquiry about the item(s) that is potentially an attempt to scam you out of money. Quite often the initial message will be vague and contain poor grammar and spelling. Here is an actual message I received recently, "Please lemme know if the appliance is still up for grabs; I had appreciate a reply with the price to my email at doyleson(##)@gmail.com as I'm currently at work."

Eagerly, I replied but it wasn't the reply the potential scammer was expecting. If I had replied in favor of the scammer, I would have been instructed to provide my name and address in order to receive an overnight payment. This payment is usually in the form of a business or cashier's check; both are phony but may appear to be real.

The scammer will track the shipping status and when they know you've received their "payment," they will begin pressuring you to deposit the check and forward funds to their "shipper" or "business partner" that supposedly will retrieve the item(s) from you. The scammer will almost always pay more than the asking price to compensate you for your troubles. Once you have deposited the check they will pressure you to immediately send money via wire transfer, PayPal, etc.

Some scammers will attempt to gain your trust by offering an online escrow service, making the transaction appear more legitimate. Most of these escrow services are also phony, and operated by the same scammers replying to the ads.

Although these types of scams seem obvious to some people, they're increasing in frequency because the scammers are successful. When it comes to selling an item(s) on Craigslist, most would-be buyers will attempt to negotiate a price down and are unlikely to offer more money than you're asking. Remember, if it seems too good to be true then it probably is.

Craigslist provides an abundance of information to help people identify potential scams and how to avoid them. If you're considering using Craigslist to buy or sell an item(s), educate yourself and avoid the headaches associated with dealing with these scammers!

CONTACT US

720.382.5700

333 5th Street
P.O. Box 435
Frederick, CO 80530



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