

Sweepstakes

Unsolicited mailings or telephone calls claiming that you have won a 'Sweepstakes' promotion, and requesting that you send payment to redeem or collect the 'prize' should be received with extreme skepticism. Unwary consumers who pay a 'prepayment' or 'refundable' deposit, or who call 900 telephone numbers which involve a per-minute cost, may be very disappointed when they find out the 'prize' was misrepresented, overpriced, or worthless.

The small print in sweepstakes or free prize offers will indicate that the amount of any prize will be far less than the cost consumers incur in responding. Telephone scam operators may request payment by overnight mail delivery or pick-up by commercial courier in order to receive the money quickly, before a consumer becomes suspicious, or to avoid possible federal mail fraud charges.

The bogus operator may even ask for a credit card number to verify the consumer's 'eligibility' to win the prize, and then use the number to make unauthorized charges to the consumer's charge account.

Consumers should beware and remember that legitimate sweepstake offers do not require the winners to pay money to collect prizes, and do not require credit card numbers to be given over the telephone. Do not send any money or give out your credit card, bank account, or social security numbers. If contacted by phone, ask for additional written information about the company, and always take time to thoroughly investigate the company before responding to any sweepstakes prize, or supposed 'Free' gift offers.