

DOJ Home
Department Index
Publications
Cold Case Unit
Consumer Protection
Cold Case Unit
Elder Abuse and Financial
Exploitation Unit
Charitable Trust
Victims' Assistance
Commission
Victim Services
Office of the Chief Medical
Examiner
Grants
Medicaid Fraud Unit
Career Opportunities
Internships
Mission Statement
Special Interest Items
American Recovery and
Reinvestment Act
Recovery.gov

DOJ > News Releases

RELEASED BY: Michael A. Delaney, Attorney General
Robert A. Fleury, Deputy Commissioner, NH Banking
Department
SUBJECT: Scam Alert Targeting Lawyers
DATE: July 15, 2010
RELEASE TIME: Immediate
CONTACT: Assistant Attorney General Karen A. Gorham
(603) 271-1196

Attorney General Michael Delaney and Deputy Banking Commissioner Robert Fleury issue the following consumer alert to New Hampshire citizens.

The New Hampshire Attorney General and the New Hampshire Banking Department have received two complaints in as many weeks from lawyers who are being targeted by international scam artists. The counterfeit check scam has already cost one local attorney over \$240,000.

In the first case, a local attorney was retained, purportedly by a large company, for a collection matter. That attorney's client then claimed to have settled the matter on their own. A large settlement check was forwarded to the attorney, complete with a letter from local "opposing counsel" on what was later determined to be fraudulent letterhead. Instructions were then sent to have settlement money wired to the client. The attorney was concerned and contacted "opposing counsel." The client did not know anything about the case. The check was deemed fraudulent. This attorney never wired the settlement money to the "client" and suffered no monetary loss.

In another case, a local attorney was "retained" by a Chinese company via e-mail. The retainer was to be paid by one of the client's customers via bank check. The attorney received a very large check and deposited the check in an IOLTA account. The attorney then received wire transfer instructions. As a result, the bank verified that the funds were available. The attorney then wired approximately half of the total check amount to a "supplier" of the client, per the client's instructions. Within days, the attorney learned that holds had been placed on all of his business, personal and joint accounts. The initial check he had received was deemed counterfeit. Since the depositor is responsible for checks deposited into the account, this attorney suffered a loss exceeding \$240,000.

Consumers and lawyers are urged to use caution when wiring funds and dealing with individuals strictly through electronic communications.