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Common scams New Jersey residents are falling victim to

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It seems no one is immune to scams these days. Scammers call, text, hack, and steal ... online, over the phone and in person. New Jersey recorded \$251.7 million lost to fraud in 2023, according to 52,478 reports made to the Federal Trade Commission.

According to a study by QR code generator QRFY, the most common scam was identity theft, accounting for 20% of all scam reports in the Garden State. Credit Bureaus, Information Furnishers and Report Users followed in second at 17% and Imposter Scams was a close third at 14%.

The study analyzed data from the FTC to discover the most and least defrauded states, as well as which categories of scams are most common in each of them. New Jersey was found to be the ninth most defrauded state in the U.S. based on money lost relative to the state's population size.

The top rule of thumb is if something seems too good to be true, it probably is false. Be mindful of whether the person you are speaking to is who they claim to be, and make sure to authenticate all official channels before disclosing any personal or financial details.

What are the most common scams in New Jersey?

Identity Theft (20%) – Identity theft is a form of fraud that involves someone using personal or financial information without permission. It can damage credit status and cost time and money. Look out for bills for items you did not purchase, letters stolen from the mailbox or no mail at all, and information on a credit report that you don't recognize. To protect yourself, don't share personal information like a bank account number, Social Security number, or date of birth if requested via text, email or phone. Only go through companies' official websites when making online purchases. Review credit card and bank account statements regularly and look for unauthorized or suspicious transactions and report them immediately.

Credit Bureaus, Information Furnishers and Report Users (17%) –

Information furnishers report consumer information to consumer reporting agencies. This includes check verification services, credit bureaus and tenant screening companies. Scams here refer to false, inaccurate, or incomplete information reporting as well as improper use of consumer information. Information furnishers have legal obligations and rules under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, and it is essential to report inaccurate or improper information use as soon as possible.

Imposter Scams (14%) – Imposter scams are cases where someone tricks you into sending money while claiming to be someone they are not. This type of scam can be carried out over the phone, via email, or text. It often involves a cybercriminal scammer posing as someone from a legitimate authority, such as a bank, who claims you owe a certain amount of money. The scammer will then ask the victim to wire transfer money or purchase a gift card. To avoid becoming a victim of imposter scams, never send money to someone you do not know and do not give out personal information on the phone to people you do not know, even if they seem legitimate.

Online Shopping and Negative Reviews (7%) – These take various forms, including people falling victim to fake stores. Consumers are often lured in by a fake ad placed on social media, and then they place an order they never receive. Other online ads may appear from well-recognized brands but are scams.

Banks and Lenders (5%) - These scams refer to loans offered under false pretenses. The scammer hooks their target by making a promise they can't deliver on or by hiding the actual loan cost. Other banks and lender-related frauds aim to obtain personal or financial information, such as a Social Security or credit card number, or charge exorbitant rates or hidden fees.

Other scams in New Jersey

Auto (3%) – Auto-related scams can take many forms, such as deceptive advertisements for cars sold at unbelievably low prices or scammers pretending to be representatives of car dealers, manufacturers, or insurers. These types of scammers also will try to convince you that your auto warranty or insurance is on the verge of expiring and try to get your personal information.

Credit Cards and Loss Protection (3%) – Credit card fraud occurs when an unauthorized person gains access to card information and uses the information to make purchases. Scammers can get access to your information through lost or stolen credit cards, by skimming a credit card, such as at an ATM, or by hacking a computer. Protect yourself from these kinds of scams by signing up for \$0 liability protection on unauthorized charges, monitoring accounts closely, signing up for transaction alerts and reporting unauthorized charges as soon as they are noticed.

Debt Collection (3%) – A legitimate debt collector should provide their company name, mailing address and details regarding a debt they claim is owed. A debt collector refusing to furnish information about a debt, attempting to collect an unrecognized debt, or threatening with criminal charges typically indicates it is a debt collection scam.

Internet Services (3%) – Internet service scams are typically phone calls, recorded messages or text messages, that claim an opportunity to reduce monthly payments. The individual calling, or the person who answers when a provided number is dialed, insists on a “prepayment” towards a bill to be eligible for the offer. They may insist on payment using gift cards, citing a partnership with a well-known company for a promotional campaign, and request a call back with the gift card number. Once that is done, they extract the gift card information and other sensitive personal details during the conversation.

Prizes, Sweepstakes and Lotteries (2%) – Scammers use the pretext of a prize or lottery jackpot to steal personal information and money. The main warning sign for this type of scam is having first to pay an amount of money to get the prize, which the scammer will ask for payment through wire transfer, gift cards or cryptocurrency. If asked to give financial information to claim any prize or sweepstakes, that is usually a good sign that this is a fraud.

If you suspect that you or someone you know has fallen victim to fraud, report the incident to the FTC through www.ReportFraud.ftc.gov

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