

## **Don't be Fooled by False Companies Posing as Legitimate Agencies**

*The Better Business Bureau (BBB) of Eastern North Carolina advises consumers not to fall prey to scam artists acting as imposters of legitimate agencies.*

**Sept. 19, 2007 - [PRLog](#)** -- The Better Business Bureau (BBB) of Eastern North Carolina advises consumers not to fall prey to scam artists acting as imposters of legitimate agencies. In addition, consumers must also be aware that companies use official-sounding names in order to gain access to money and personal information.

Highlighted in the BBB Consumer Alerts, a company claiming to be the official Division of Monetary Resources states it is an information company. The group sends notices to consumers stating that they are eligible to receive \$2 million in funds. Once consumers pay a cash fee, the company only provides information on cash awards and never delivers on funds.

“The Better Business Bureau often receives complaints regarding companies that employ the technique of using a company name that sounds similar to a government agency or well-know provider,” says Beverly Baskin, president and CEO of the BBB of Eastern N.C. “Consumers should always check with the BBB before subscribing to any fee-based program or entering into a business transaction with a company that is unknown to them.”

In another case, Social Security Administration (SSA) imposters have been calling older adults and setting up appointments for representatives to visit the consumers' homes. During these sessions, the reps explain changes in social security benefits. This is not a method utilized by the real SSA.

“Geiko” Financial and Trust, an advance fee loan scam, is impersonating the well-known insurance company, Geico. While the agency claims to have offices in Annapolis and Indianapolis, when BBB representatives visited them there was no Geiko to be found. In fact, the company's Web site is registered to an address in Canada.

For more information on legitimate companies and their practices, visit [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org).

About the BBB of Eastern North Carolina:

The Better Business Bureau of Eastern North Carolina is a 501 (c)(6) not-for-profit corporation serving 33 counties in Eastern North Carolina. The organization is funded primarily by membership dues from more than 3,200 local business and professional firms. The BBB promotes integrity, consumer confidence and business ethics through business self-regulation in the local marketplace. Services provided by the BBB include, reports on companies and charitable organizations, general monitoring of advertising in the marketplace, dispute resolution services, and consumer/business education programs. All services are provided at no cost to the public, with the occasional exception of mediation and arbitration. Visit [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org).

### **CONSUMER ALERTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2007**

In an effort to keep the media and public informed, the Better Business Bureau of Eastern North Carolina offers monthly BBB Consumer Alerts as potential story or interview ideas. Readers should take into consideration the importance of the practice in question and the total performance of a company. This list is current as of release date. Information regarding business or consumer topics reported here can be obtained through the BBB office by contacting [info@raleigh.bbb.org](mailto:info@raleigh.bbb.org).

·X M Radio sells satellite radio service. Consumers have complained primarily about service issues and billing disputes. One Indianapolis consumer signed up for a free trial period. He had to call four times to finally get the service he wanted. Almost 900 complaints have been filed against this Washington company, and they have an unsatisfactory record.

·Best Deal City offers an Internet Shopping Service. In June 2007 the BBB started receiving complaints from consumers alleging they had sent money orders ranging from \$209.98 to \$239.98 for the purchase of Play Station 3, Wii game systems or Apple Ipod; however, they haven't received the product, and they can't reach the company. One of the company's representatives in Hawaii claims to be a victim also. She thought she was going to make money from home by collecting money orders and helping the company process orders. Other business opportunity victims are located in Hawaii, New York, Massachusetts, Michigan, Virginia and California. The company also falsely advertises BBB membership. Of course, they do not qualify for that status. When the BBB attempted to contact the company regarding the unauthorized use of the BBBO nLine logo, the certified letter was returned with a sticker reading, "RETURN TO SENDER DUE TO VIOLATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE FALSE REPRESENTATION STATUTE."

·Life Systems Institute is sending a postcard to consumers which states, "Life Systems Institute is a not-for-profit company that can help pay your debts up to \$1,000 . . ." and "No! You don't have to pay us back – ever!" The BBB challenged this statement. This is a multi-level selling company that sells alternative health products like salt substitutes and Colloidal Silver. Consumers who join the program are required to pay an up-front fee of \$235. It appears that participants' commissions are put into an account and then the company pays the participants' debts. Does this make sense??

·Service Magic claims to have the "largest network of prescreened home contractors" from which consumers can pick and hire. The BBB requested the company to substantiate this website statement, but they have failed to provide an adequate response or modify claims in accordance with BBB/FTC Advertising Guidelines. 175 complaints have been filed against this Colorado company, and they have an unsatisfactory rating.

·The Seideman Law Firm states it offers legal services and debt negotiation. Even though it is located in Cucamonga, California, the firm is not licensed to practice law in California. Complainants allege the company failed to negotiate debts as agreed, and in some cases, their debt and late fees continued to compound, destroying their credit. Thank goodness consumers are checking this one out. The BBB suggests consumers needing debt counseling should work with local organizations and make sure to check them out with the BBB first.

·Division of Monetary Resources – Sounds official, doesn't it? This company sends notices to consumers stating that the consumer's name is eligible to receive funds over \$2,342,000. The company's disclaimer says they are an information company. Actually what they do is inform consumers about cash awards. Of course, there is a fee. This Miami, Florida company has the BBB's lowest rating.

·"Geiko" Financial and Trust is an advance fee loan scam. Note Geiko is spelled with a "k" not a "c" like the well-known insurance company. The scammers give an address in Annapolis, MD. However, when a BBB representative drove by the address, they discovered a newly constructed two level business center. No Geiko! The BBB rep called the property leasing company. No Geiko had ever leased from them. The BBB rep was able to find out that the company's website is registered to a Francis Ivanson, with an address and cell phone number in Canada. Most of these advance fee loan companies are located in Canada, but give local addresses. Another of these operations gave an address in Indianapolis, which turned out to be the Catholic Archdiocese! Thanks to the Baltimore BBB for their investigation.

·Social Security Administration (SSA) imposters have been calling older adults. These individuals are telling the older adults that they will be personally visited by a Social Security representative who will be explaining all of the changes in their social security benefits. Of course, the SSA does not utilize this method. If you, or someone you know, has received one of these calls, please contact the BBB and alert your local police department.

Website: [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)

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City/Town	Raleigh
State/Province	North Carolina
Country	United States
Industry	<a href="#">Consumer</a> , <a href="#">Retail</a> , <a href="#">Business</a>
Tags	<a href="#">Beverly Baskin</a> , <a href="#">Better Business Bureau</a> , <a href="#">Consumer Alerts</a> , <a href="#">False Companies</a> , <a href="#">Geiko</a> , <a href="#">Division Of Monetary Resources</a> , <a href="#">Ssa</a>
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