

# UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY



## ***PUBLIC SAFETY ADVISORY – JULY 27, 2006***

### **ALERT:**

Critical / Major Incident

### **ADVISORY:**

Important Incident

### **BULLETIN:**

General Information

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Public Safety would like to inform the University of St. Thomas community of a scam involving counterfeit money orders/cashiers checks being offered to UST community members.

Over the past two months, two UST community members and one non-UST affiliated individual have reported to Public Safety that they were contacted electronically by a person claiming to be an incoming international UST student seeking a rental unit. The UST community members advised they were contacted as a result of posting their rental units on the UST classifieds website. The individual offers to send payment covering the initial cost for the unit, but sends a money order or cashiers check for a higher dollar amount.

The individual sending the money order/cashiers check makes contact again and advises that they sent too much money, and asks that the difference be sent back to them; otherwise they will not be able to buy their plane ticket to the United States.

In two of these instances, the victims sent money back in excess of \$1500, only to be contacted later by their bank and informed that the money order/cashiers check were fake.

Anyone with information regarding similar incidents is urged to call Public Safety at (651) 962-5100 or the St. Paul Police Department at (651) 291-1111.

Fraud prevention tips:

- Fake payment scams by their nature sound very believable.
- Scammers actively search for victims online, such as those posting items for sale.
- Counterfeit checks, money orders, and currency look very real, and can even fool bank tellers.
- Under federal law, banks must make deposited funds available quickly. Just because you withdraw the money, doesn't mean the check is good. It can often take weeks to discovery forgeries.
- You are responsible for the deposits you make. Be certain of who you are dealing with and the type of payment you have received.
- There is **no** legitimate reason for someone who is giving you payment to ask you to send money back. Insist on getting paid the exact amount.
- If you engage in online transactions, utilize a payment service (i.e. PayPal) to send/receive funds.

**Public Safety urges you to be pro-active and alert. You can help prevent crime!**

If you have information regarding crimes on campus you are urged to contact  
Public Safety at (651) 962-5100 and the police (651) 291-1111