

May 2016

Fraud Alert!

Older consumers targeted by fraudsters not once, but twice!

There is a popular financial scam targeting older consumers who had previously fallen prey to fraudulent money-making schemes, such as bogus timeshare investments and in-home business opportunities. So-called asset recovery companies are contacting these past victims, promising to get refunds for a substantial fee, failing to deliver promised services, and leaving consumers financially worse off than before.

What does this scam look like?

The asset recovery company contacts the defrauded older consumer claiming that they can get their money back for an upfront fee of several hundred to thousands of dollars. The company often claims it has unique expertise to help victims of fraud recover their funds. Once the older consumer pays the upfront fee, the company fails to perform any service that the consumer could not have done themselves. For example, if the consumer used a credit card to pay the original scammer, the asset recovery company usually will do nothing beyond disputing the charge with the credit card company, which the consumer can do themselves, for free. They often submit a complaint to an agency that does not charge anything to process a complaint – like us, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Moreover, they often do not even adequately follow through with the worthless services they offer; filing claims that are too old to be legally valid or without proper documentation to support the consumer's claims.

Don't be scammed twice! Ways to protect yourself.

Here are some warning signs that can help you avoid becoming a victim of an asset recovery scam: § Upfront fees to recover money – Don't pay for any part of a service that has not been performed. You have the right to refuse service and

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verify the legitimacy of any organization. § Claims of insider information and connections – Submitting complaints to federal agencies, such as the CFPB or the Federal Trade Commission, or state attorneys general offices are free to the public and easy to use. Private companies do not have special access to these free consumer complaint resources. § Requests for secrecy – Never allow anyone to discourage you from seeking information, support, and advice from family members, friends, or trusted advisors before making a financial transaction.

How do I get help? Alert your bank or credit card company immediately if you believe you have been a victim of fraud. Be sure to ask the bank to prohibit future withdrawals, debits or credit card payments made by or to the scammer. If your bank account information, debit card or credit card number was used without your permission, ask the bank to restore the funds taken from your account. If asset recovery services you paid for with your credit card aren't provided as promised, you might be able to dispute the charges. If scammed, report it promptly to your local law enforcement office, and submit a complaint to the Federal Trade Commission at ftccomplaintassistant.gov.

Reprinted from: consumerfinance.gov

Monthly Fraud Alerts brought to you by:

[Bucks County Crimes Against Older Adults Task Force](#)

Bucks County District Attorney's Office

215-348-6344

Bucks County Area Agency on Aging

215-348-0510

Bucks County Coroner's Office

215-348-3852

Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA)

1-800-675-6900

A Woman's Place (AWP)

1-800-220-8116

Bucks County Office of Consumer Protection

215-348-6060

Bucks County Register of Wills

215-348-6265

www.crimesagainstolderadultsbucks.org

24 - HOUR HOTLINE: 1-800-490-8505