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Scam of the Week

The scam goes like this. You list an item for sale on E-Bay, or a want ad. A potential buyer calls or emails you that they will purchase your item but they reside across the country and will need someone (a shipper) to come and pick up the item. They state that they will send you a certified check for the item and the cost of shipping the item with the shipper. The buyer wants you to pay the shipper for them when they arrive to pick up the item from you. They tell you that this guarantees that the shipper will show up to get the item. The Buyer will generally offer you additional compensation to handle this transaction for them. The shipper will show up with the certified check or money order and give it to you the seller. The seller will go deposit the check while the shipper is waiting and then the seller will pay the shipper with cash, a certified check, or money order. The shipper loads up the property and then races to the bank to cash your check on the way out of town. Since the bank credited your account from the check you deposited the check you just wrote to the shipper will clear the bank. Then the certified check you received bounces after your bank tries to collect from the other bank, if it even exists. By that time, your money and property are long gone with little, if any, chance of recovery. Since there are no funds for your bank to place in your account, you have to repay the bank.

Remember if the buyer's check, even a certified check or money order, bounces your banker will withdraw the amount from your account if they do not receive the funds from the other bank. According to one banker if you do not know who is delivering you a certified check there is a 90% chance the certified check or money order will not be valid.

Look for these clues to see if the transaction may be fraudulent:

- 1) The deal sounds too good to be true (You don't get something for nothing);
- 2) The buyer wants paid cash or some other form of guaranteed funds they can immediately turn into cash even though they want you to accept a check or some other form of delayed payment (Your money is at risk not theirs);
- 3) The buyer wants you to pay them for something even though they are buying something from you (When was the last time you purchased something at a store and received money back from the store?); or
- 4) Anything else that seems out of the ordinary.

If you are suspicious about the offer and want to protect yourself, you should contact a trusted friend, your own attorney, your banker, a law enforcement officer, or me at (307) 283-1090.

Sincerely,

Joseph M. Baron  
Crook County & Prosecuting Attorney