

## International Lottery Scams

*“Congratulations! You may receive a certified check for up to \$400,00,00 U.S. CASH! One Lump sum! Tax free! Your odds to WIN are 1-6.”*  
*“Hundreds of U.S. citizens win every week using our secret system! You can win as much as you want!”*

### **Sounds great? It’s fraud.**

Scam operators—often based in Canada—are using the telephone and direct mail to entice U.S. consumers to buy chances in high-stakes foreign lotteries from as far away as Australia and Europe. These lottery solicitations violate U.S. law, which prohibits the cross-border sale or purchase of lottery tickets by phone or mail.

Federal law enforcement authorities are intercepting and destroying millions of foreign lottery mailings sent or delivered by the truckload into the U.S. Consumers, lured by prospects of instant wealth, are responding

to the solicitations that do get through—to the tune of \$120 million a year, according to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Most promotions for foreign lotteries are likely to be phony. Many scam operators don’t even buy the promised lottery tickets. Others buy some tickets, but keep the “winnings” for themselves. In addition lottery hustlers use victims’ bank account numbers to make unauthorized withdrawals or their credit card numbers to run up additional charges.

Beware of a foreign lottery scam that adopts the name of Spain’s largest lottery prize, “El Gordo,” to con consumers out of substantial sums of money. According to the Spanish government, consumers in the United States may receive phony letters, as well as forged materials purporting to be from Spanish banks, that claim that these consumers have been the “lucky winners” of a large

cash prize. To claim the prize, the consumer is told he or she must pay a sum that goes toward the taxes, bank costs, and processing fees necessary to deliver the prize money.

The real drawing for the “El Gordo” prize takes place during the holiday season. The Spanish government indicates that the fraudsters who carry out the phony drawing use the actual addresses of official Spanish organizations to make their scam appear legitimate.

If you receive a letter this holiday season claiming you have won a big prize in a foreign lottery, do not pay any money—it is a scam. It is illegal for U.S. consumers to participate in a foreign lottery.

The following are some words of caution for consumers who are thinking about responding to a foreign lottery:

(over)

- If you play a foreign lottery—through the mail or over the telephone—you’re violating federal law.
- There are no “secret” systems for winning foreign lotteries. Your chances of winning more than the cost of your tickets are slim to none.
- If you purchase one foreign lottery ticket, expect many more bogus offers for lottery or investment “opportunities.” Your name will be placed on “sucker lists” that

fraudulent telemarketers buy and sell.

- Keep your credit card and bank account numbers to yourself. Scam artists often ask for them during an unsolicited sales pitch.

The bottom line: Ignore all mail and phone solicitations for foreign lottery promotions. If you receive what looks like “lottery” material from a foreign country, give it to your local postmaster.

For more information, or to file a complaint, contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection at:

**(800) 422-7128**

2811 Agriculture Drive  
PO Box 8911  
Madison WI 53708-8911  
(608) 224-4976

**FAX: (608) 224-4939**

**TTY: (608) 224-5058**

**E-MAIL:**

**DATCPHotline@Wisconsin.gov**

**WEBSITE:**

**www.datcp.state.wi.us**