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Consumer Advisory Bulletin-April 2004

International Lottery Schemes: You're the Loser!

The odds are very good that you've received a message by mail or email that you've won thousands or even millions of dollars in one of the big foreign lotteries, such as Spain's "El Gordo" lottery, or the Netherlands Lottery. The odds are even better it's a fraud designed to trick you into sending money that you'll never see again, or to drain your bank account. It IS a fraud - don't send any money.

Thousands of Iowans are receiving urgent messages like this. "To Award Winner: Final notice to claim award of \$5,500,000 in cash." They say you've won a prize in one of the big foreign lotteries - lotteries that DO exist, but are used by con-artists to fool people. They say you must send \$1800 at once (for example) for processing fees, or bank costs or taxes. (They won't let you subtract the fee from your millions.) They often ask you to provide your bank account number. They urge you to keep your "award" secret for a while.

It's a scam. You're not a winner. You lose the \$1800. They may drain your bank account. And you get even more phony email or mail or calls -- you're on a "sucker list."

International crooks run these scams. It's yet another "advance-fee" scheme that deceives people into sending money for some reason (like Nigeria scams.) International lottery schemes must work, because more and more Iowans are receiving such lottery "prize notices," especially with the advent of free email from anywhere in the world.

- **Beware of any notice that you've won a lottery.** Don't be fooled by an explanation that you won even though you never entered ("your email address was selected in a random drawing"), and don't be fooled by names of real lotteries. ("El Gordo" is the real Spanish lottery -- "The Fat One" -- but prize notices are phony.)
- **Keep your bank account and credit card information to yourself.**
- Don't pay to PLAY a foreign lottery. (Telemarketers sometimes call from Canada, urging you to pay to play.) It's a scam -- and it's illegal for you to play anyway.
- Report lottery scams. You can forward international lottery scam emails to the Federal Trade Commission at uce@ftc.gov. Send regular mail to your postmaster. If you've been cheated, contact the Iowa Attorney General's Office.

For more information or to file a complaint, contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Call 515-281-5926. The Attorney General's web site is: www.iowaAttorneyGeneral.org.

Federal Trade Commission [bulletin on international lottery schemes](#).

FTC poster with [good graphics about international lottery schemes](#).

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