Overpayment Scams and Internet Fraud

An unfortunate fact of life is that fraud is all around us; there is always someone trying to take advantage of someone else for his or her personal gain. The Internet is no different; people have been trying to perpetrate fraud over the Internet since its inception. The “Nigerian Letter” scam is sufficiently well known to make it into comic strips. Attempts at identity theft arrive almost daily in email.

A more recent type of scam involves overpayments for goods or services. In this type of scam the “buyer” will come up with some sort of story as to why he or she is sending the seller a check or money order for more than the agreed upon price. In turn, the “buyer” requests that the seller wire back the excess money or wire to some third party. The check or money order bounces and the seller is then out the wired amount. This type of scam is popular where individuals may be selling or auctioning an item, or even in real estate transactions where a rental property may be involved. As with any business transaction, whether in person or over the Internet, care must be taken to ensure the integrity of the other party and to ensure that no scam takes place.

Additional information pertaining to Internet fraud and abuse can be found at http://onguardonline.gov, maintained as a collaboration of agencies of the federal government.

Any questions pertaining to Internet scams can be directed to the LTS Help Desk or to any Computing Consultant.