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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 2024

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DLCA Warns Against Publishing Clearance House Scams

(U.S. Virgin Islands) – On January 3, 2024, the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA) received an email from a concerned resident informing of a call she'd received on her landline from a Paul Anderson from the Publishers Clearing House (PCH) located in Jericho New York notifying her of the large sum of money and Mercedes Benz that she had won. The resident was further informed that in order to receive same-day delivery of the cash and vehicle, she would have to visit Walgreens to purchase a Visa Vanilla Gift card for \$500.00 to begin the process to claim the case prize.

If you receive a similar call, this is a scam. Hang up or simply do not respond. Crooks use clever schemes to defraud millions of people every year. They often combine new technology with old tricks to get people to send money or give out personal information. Here are six (6) tips to help you spot PCH scams:

1. PCH Does Not Email or Call Its Big Winners

If you receive an email, a telephone call, or a bulk mail letter saying that you've won a big prize from PCH, it's a scam. According to the PCH website: *"All PCH prizes of \$500 or greater are awarded by either certified or express letter or in person by our famous Prize Patrol at our option."*

So, if you receive a prize notification by any other method than certified mail or an in-person award, you know you are being scammed.

2. You Never Have to Pay to Receive a Legitimate PCH Win

Scammers extort money from you in exchange for a promise of a prize that never materializes. The truth is you never, ever have to pay to receive a sweepstakes prize from Publishers Clearing House or any other company.

3. Do Not Give Out Confidential Information When You Enter

You don't have to give Publishers Clearing House your address, bank account number, driver's license number, or any other confidential information when you first enter. You may have to fill out an affidavit to verify eligibility if you win, but not when you enter. If the entry form is asking for this kind of personal information, it's a sign you are on a spoofed website.



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4. Receiving a Check Does Not Mean You Have Won

Scammers sometimes make it appear that you're not "really" paying for your prize by handing over a check and asking you to send back some of the money. After all, they're providing the funds, right? Wrong. Those checks aren't legitimate, and you'll be left holding the bill.

5. Do Your Research Before You Respond

There are some steps that you can take to verify your prize wins. Some of them include never, ever paying money to receive a prize and using Google to search for similar win notifications that have been reported to consumer organizations as scams.

6. Verify Your Wins with Publishers Clearing House Directly

If you have checked the steps above and you're still not sure if your win notice is legitimate, you can contact PCH directly to ask them to verify your prize. Do NOT use the telephone numbers or email addresses included in your win notice; scammers fake that information to trick their victims.

Publishers Clearing House works diligently to fight scams, both by working with law enforcement officials and through public education. For more tips on avoid Publishers Clearing House scams, visit the Contest Integrity section of the PCH website, PCH.com.

Have You Been Scammed?

If you have already sent money or purchased a gift card and provided both the card number and pin number to a PCH con artist, DLCA encourages you to report the call to the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) Economic Crime Bureau. You will also need to be extra cautious in the future because scammers consider people who have been scammed to be easy prey, and there is a good chance that you will be targeted again.

Sign up for free scam alerts from the FTC at ftc.gov/scams. Get the latest tips and advice about scams sent right to your inbox. To report a scam, contact the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs hotlines at 340.712.SCAM (7226) or 340.727.SCAM (7226) or via email at consumerawareness@dlca.vi.gov. You may also report scams at ftc.gov/complaint. Your reports help the FTC and other law enforcement investigate scams and bring crooks to justice.