Fraud Awareness Essentials: Protecting Your Money

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What you'll learn

- Current Fraud Schemes
- How to Protect Yourself
- How Valley First Supports You
- Additional Fraud Resources

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What is Financial Fraud?

- Financial fraud is when someone tricks you to take your money or financial information
- It often happens through scams, fake offers, or misleading messages
- The goal is usually to steal money or get access to your accounts
- The person committing fraud pretends to be someone you trust
- It can impact individuals, businesses and entire communities



What is a Phishing Scam?

- A phishing scam is when someone pretends to be a person or company you trust
- They might send emails, texts, or messages that look real
- They try to play on your emotions – like creating urgency or fear – to get you to act quickly
- The goal is to trick you into sharing personal information, like passwords or banking details
- Sometimes they also try to get you to click a link or download something that can harm your device

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How does Phishing Scam work?

- A scammer reaches out pretending to be someone you trust, like your bank or a company you know
- They ask you to share personal details, such as account numbers, card numbers, or login information
- If you share that information, they can use it to access your accounts
- This can lead to things like unauthorized purchases or new accounts being opened in your name

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Common types of Phishing Scams



Email & Text scams:

- Messages may start with generic greetings like “Dear customer”
- They often have spelling or grammar mistakes
- They include suspicious links or attachments
- They try to rush or scare you into acting quickly

Phone call scams:

- The caller pretends to be someone important, like your bank or law enforcement
- They push you to act right away without giving you time to think

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How to avoid Phishing Scams

- Stay alert and trust your instincts – if something feels off, it probably is
- Never share personal or financial information through unexpected messages
- Avoid clicking links or downloading attachments from people you don't know
- Only click links if you requested them yourself
- Take a moment to pause – scammers want you to rush
- Double-check before responding if you're unsure, contact the company directly using a number or website you trust

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Employment Scams

- Fraud targeting job seekers or employees by misrepresenting job opportunities or employment conditions
  - Ex. Working hours, salary, job security, and the nature of the work itself
- Goal
  - Deceive individuals to accept job positions
  - Collect sensitive and/or personal information under false pretenses

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What Employment Scams look like



Fake recruiters:

- Scammers pretend to be hiring managers from real, well-known companies

Fake job postings:

- Job ads that look real but aren't connected to a real company

Work-from-home scams:

- Jobs that promise high pay for very little work
- They may ask you to pay upfront for things like training, equipment, or background checks

Pyramid or multi-level schemes:

- You earn money by recruiting other people instead of doing real work
- The focus is on signing up others, not the job itself

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Red flags to watch for

- No real interview or questions about your experience
- Messages come from personal emails, texts, or messaging apps instead of a company account
- You feel rushed to decide or they won't clearly explain the job
- They ask for personal ID, like your driver's license or passport, early in the process

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How to protect yourself

- Look up the company and check the job on their official website
- Never pay money to get a job
- Don't share personal information until you know the job is legit
- Report anything that feels suspicious
  - Report it to the job site where you found the posting (like LinkedIn, Indeed, etc.)
  - Report it to the company being impersonated (through their official website)
  - File a report with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at **reportfraud.ftc.gov**
  - If money or identity theft is involved, contact your bank and report it to **IdentityTheft.gov**

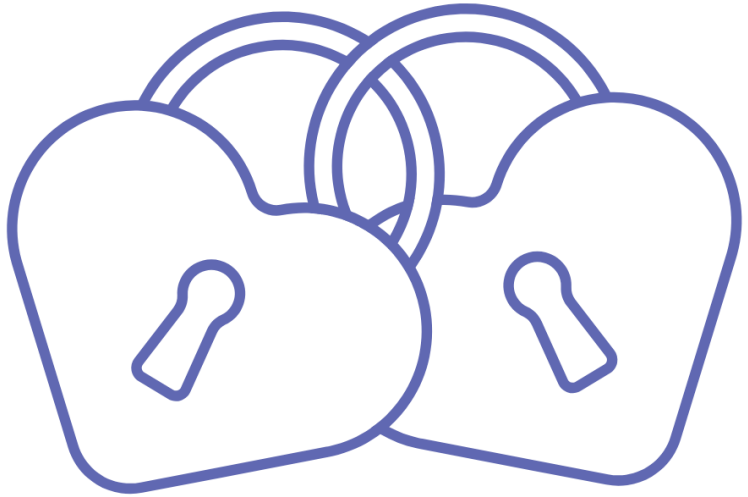
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Romance/Sweetheart Scams

A romance or sweetheart scam when someone pretends to like you or build a relationship with you so they can gain your trust and eventually ask you for money

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What does a Romance Scam look like



You meet someone online, often on a dating site or app

- They quickly build a close relationship with you
- After gaining your trust, they start asking for help

They might ask for things like:

- Money to visit you or move to be with you
- Help with an "emergency," like medical or legal issues
- Help sending or moving money for them
- They may also try to give advice about your money or investments to gain more control

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How to Avoid Sweetheart Scams

- **Take it slow** – real connections build over time; don't rush trust
- **Protect your personal info**
  - Set social media accounts to private
  - Limit who can follow or contact you
- **Get a second opinion** – talk to a trusted friend or family member
- **Never send money or share financial details** – this is the biggest red flag
- **Keep conversations on the dating platform** – scammers often push to text or email
- **Watch for warning signs** – urgent requests, inconsistent stories, excuses to avoid meeting
- **Report concerns to us right away** — we're here to help protect you and your accounts

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Mail Fraud

Mail fraud is any scam that uses the U.S. Postal Service to trick someone for financial gain

- **It's more than stolen mail** — it includes deceptive letters, fake checks, or misleading offers
- **It can involve money, goods, or personal information**
- **If something seems suspicious, contact us** — we're here to help protect you and your accounts



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Common Mail Fraud Schemes

Lottery & Sweepstakes Scams

- You're told you've won a prize
- Asked to pay fees or "taxes" before receiving winnings

Charity Scams

- Fake donation requests posing as legitimate causes
- Money goes to the scammer, not a real charity

Financial Scams

- Requests payment for services, loans, or credit cards that don't exist
- Often promise quick cash or guaranteed returns

Targeting Vulnerable Individuals

- Scammers may take advantage of limited technology knowledge or trust

Mail Theft

- Stealing checks or personal information from mailboxes

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How to Protect Your Mail & Information

- **Stay alert** — take a moment to make sure mail and offers are legitimate
- **Use USPS Informed Delivery**
  - Preview images of incoming mail
  - Spot missing or unexpected items early
- **Go paperless when you can**
  - Helps reduce the risk of mail theft and fraud
- **Consider a P.O. Box**
  - More secure and less likely to be tampered with
  - Especially helpful in rural areas

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We're here to help protect you and your accounts

If you notice anything unusual:

- Contact us immediately at **(877) 549-4567**
- Find tips and resources on our website
  - Fraud Center
  - Fraud Prevention under our Financial Resource Library

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Additional Resources

Federal Trade Commission

https://consumer.ftc.gov/identity-theft-online-security

United States Postal Service

https://www.usps.com/manage/informed-delivery.htm

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Additional Resources for Reporting Fraud

FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3)
https://www.ic3.gov

Federal Trade Commission
https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/fake-check-scams

United States Postal Inspection Service
https://www.uspis.gov

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THANK YOU!

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