



# BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Mail Fraud Scam Warning**

“If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is,” Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said today as his office learned of a new financial scam attempt that has appeared in Butte County. The scam consists of attempting to have a person cash a bogus check they receive in the mail and forward a portion of it in cash back to the sender/scammer.

Ramsey said an Oroville resident recently received an official and expensive looking two-day priority United States Postal Service envelope containing a typed letter and a business check. The sender’s address was listed as “Bridge City, Texas.” The check was made payable to the resident for the amount of \$2,450 from a health insurance company in Michigan. The alert resident recognized it was probably a scam and turned it over to the District Attorney’s Consumer Protection Division.

Ramsey said the letter instructed the recipient to provide his/her full name, the check number on the check and dollar amount to a phone number with an area code of “(219).” Ramsey said the letter further instructed the recipient to “deposit the check via ATM or electronically.”

Ramsey said the final instructions indicated the recipient was to send a photo of the deposit receipt to three phone numbers with different area codes and an email address listed in the letter. The letter ended with the handwritten name “Isabel” from the “Payment Secure Department.”

Ramsey said his investigators determined the account holder listed on the check, “Beaumont Health,” in Michigan was not aware of this scam and did not authorize this check. Investigators determined “Comerica Bank and Trust,” listed on the check, did not have any affiliation with Beaumont Health. The check was fake.

Ramsey said investigators were able to contact the scammers by calling one of the phone numbers provided in the letter. Investigators pretended to be the recipient of the check and letter. The scammer sounded to be a male with a heavy foreign accent, most likely from Africa. The scammer instructed investigators to send a photo of a deposit receipt, proving the check that had been sent had been deposited.

Ramsey said investigators learned through their conversation with the scammer that recipients of the checks and letters were told they are being “paid” to have an advertising decal installed or “wrapped” on their vehicle. The scammer told investigators that recipients would be paid \$600 of

the total dollar amount listed on the check to simply drive around with the decal on their vehicles. The scammer told investigators a “decal installer” would arrive soon to install the decal on the recipient’s vehicle.

Ramsey said the scammer would not provide additional information to investigators upon being asked and was repetitive in his instructions. The scammer also instructed investigators to download the “Cash App” application on a cellular phone and send the remaining money (\$1850) from the check to a username provided by the scammer. The “Cash App” application is a mobile payment service used to transfer money to others with the use of a cellular phone.

Ramsey said he wanted to remind the citizens of Butte County of how important it is to safeguard their financial and identifying information. Ramsey said scammers are continuously looking for new ways to obtain the identifying and financial information of others for the purpose of financial gain. He said never provide one’s personal information to an unknown third party.

Ramsey said the scam tactic of leading people to believe they are receiving payment with the agreement to cash a check and return funds is nothing new. But he said unfortunately some still fall victim to these scams and lose money as well as compromise their identities.

Ramsey said anyone experiencing this type of fraudulent activity should contact call the Butte County District Attorney’s Fraud Hotline at **866-DA FRAUD** (866-323-7283).