



# PAUSE AND VERIFY: A GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUALS TO AVOID FAKE CHECK SCAMS

A criminal posing as a legitimate entity may send you a check to deposit and ask you to send the money from this check to another person or entity. The check may look like a business or personal check, cashier's check or money order — but it is fake. **Pause** and **verify** before depositing checks from new or unfamiliar sources to make sure you are not at risk of a financial loss or being unknowingly involved in a crime.

## PAUSE

### IS THE CHECK FROM AN UNKNOWN SOURCE?

Be cautious of checks from individuals or organizations you do not know.

### IS THE SENDER PROVIDING UNUSUAL INSTRUCTIONS?

For example, the sender asks you to use money from the check for gift cards, cryptocurrency or to wire money to someone.

### AM I BEING PRESSURED TO ACT IMMEDIATELY?

Criminals often attempt to rush you, hoping you do not take the time to verify if the check is legitimate.

**DOES THE STORY MAKE SENSE?** Be wary of “too good to be true” scenarios, such as winning a lottery you didn’t enter or checks that are written for more than the amount owed.

**IS SOMEONE TRYING TO CONTROL THE SITUATION AND COMMUNICATION?** A legitimate entity will not try to prevent you from contacting others or your financial institution.

## VERIFY

### LOOK FOR SIGNS THAT THE CHECK IS SUSPICIOUS:

Be cautious about checks that appear to be from a different maker than expected or have unusual characteristics, such as blurred logos, poor paper quality or inconsistent fonts.

### INVESTIGATE THE ISSUER ON THE CHECK:

Research the company or individual listed as the issuer/maker (the name in the top left corner of the check) to ensure it is legitimate.

### VERIFY THE LEGITIMACY OF THE CHECK WITH THE FINANCIAL INSTITUTION:

Contact the issuing institution or the issuer on the check directly to verify its validity.

## IF YOU REALIZE THAT YOU MAY HAVE UNINTENTIONALLY DEPOSITED A FRAUDULENT CHECK:

- Do not spend or disburse any of the funds made available from the check deposit.
- Immediately contact your financial institution where the check was deposited.

*The check fraud mitigation toolkit was developed by the Federal Reserve to help educate the industry about check fraud and outline potential ways to help detect and mitigate this fraud type. Insights for this toolkit were provided through interviews with industry experts, publicly available research, and team member expertise. This toolkit is not intended to result in any regulatory or reporting requirements, imply any liabilities for fraud loss, or confer any legal status, legal definitions, or legal rights or responsibilities. While use of this toolkit throughout the industry is encouraged, utilization of the toolkit is voluntary at the discretion of each individual entity. Absent written consent, this toolkit may not be used in a manner that suggests the Federal Reserve endorses a third-party product or service.*