

Publishers Clearing House Scams Keep Coming

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Who wouldn't love to be that winner you see on TV holding a great big sweepstakes check?

That's what con artists are counting on when they claim to be Publishers Clearing House. This trick is an oldie but goodie for scammers.

The scam starts with a call or letter saying you've won the Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes. But to collect your prize, they say, you need to send money to pay for fees and taxes. Typically you'll be asked to send money by Western Union or MoneyGram, or by getting a reloadable card or gift card. Scammers ask you to pay these ways because it's nearly impossible to trace the money — and you'll almost never get it back.

But that's not the only way scammers get your money with this scam. Some will send you a realistic-looking fake check in the mail. You're told that, to claim your prize, you need to deposit the check and send some of the money back for made-up expenses. But when the check you deposit bounces — even after it seemed to clear — you may be on the hook for the money you sent.

If you think you've won a prize, here are a few things to know:

- Never send money to collect a prize, sweepstakes check, or lottery winnings. If you have to pay, it's a scam.
- Never deposit a check and send back money, even if the funds appear in your account. That's a sure sign of a scam.
- If anyone calls asking you to pay for a prize, hang up and report it to the FTC.

Want to know more? Read our article on Prize Scams. And, if you wired money to a prize scammer via Western Union between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017, you might be eligible for a refund.

Still think it's real? The real Publishers Clearing House says it will never ask you to pay a fee to collect a prize. Check out Publishers Clearing House's fraud protection page.

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