



# OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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[The Nevada Attorney General's Office has joined a group of federal, state and local government agencies and national consumer advocacy organizations to launch the Tenth Annual National Consumer Protection Week ("NCPW"), March 2-8, 2008. NCPW highlights consumer education efforts in the fight against fraud in communities across the nation. This year's NCPW theme is *Financial Literacy: A Sound Investment* and is intended to encourage consumers to empower themselves to make smarter decisions about managing their money and building a solid financial foundation. As part of this year's NCPW, the Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection is issuing a daily press release regarding issues particularly relevant to Nevada consumers. More information about NCPW is also available at [www.consumer.gov/ncpw](http://www.consumer.gov/ncpw). Thank you for your assistance in promoting this important event.]

## **ATTORNEY GENERAL ADVISES CONSUMERS TO REMEMBER THE BASICS WHEN IT COMES TO PROTECTING THEIR FINANCES**

Carson City, NV—The Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection, under the direction of Consumer Advocate Eric Witkoski, and in conjunction with the launch of the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual National Consumer Protection Week, the theme of which is *Financial Literacy: A Sound Investment*, today issued the following advisory to remind consumers of the essentials to being a well-informed, financially literate consumer.

Now more than ever, consumers need to educate themselves in ways to avoid being scammed by con artists and dishonest businesses. Before dealing with any business, and especially when making any major purchase or investment, the Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection recommends consumers:

**Don't expect something for nothing.** Be very suspicious of advertisements, sales pitches or other offers promising "risk free" sales or investment opportunities. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

**Do your homework.** When considering whether to purchase goods or services from any business, you should take the time to verify whether the business is licensed and insured, how long the business has been operating in Nevada, and whether complaints have been filed against the business. It is always wise to obtain references and recommendations from friends and family. In addition, be careful of strangers who approach you at home on behalf

of a business. Make sure you have the permanent address and phone number for the business so you can conduct independent research before agreeing to a purchase.

To research the complaint history of a business, contact both the Nevada Consumer Affairs Division at (702) 486-7355, (775) 688-1800, or toll-free at (800) 326-5202, and the Better Business Bureau at (702) 320-4500 or (775) 322-0657. A comprehensive site for state regulators is maintained at [www.fightfraud.nv.gov](http://www.fightfraud.nv.gov). Additional information on a particular business may also be available on the internet in blogs, forums and personal websites.

**Know what's in your credit report.** Before you try to obtain credit for a purchase, you need to know what is in your credit report. Otherwise, you are simply at the mercy of that company's finance department. Lenders use credit reports and credit scores to decide whether to lend money and at what rate. Insurance companies, landlords, utilities and employers also check credit reports. A report that shows defaults or late payments or a low credit score can mean not getting a loan or paying a higher interest rate. Knowing your credit score will also assist you in finding out the range of interest rates or products you are eligible for. All Nevada consumers are eligible to receive a free annual credit report from each of three major credit reporting agencies. To order your report, you must go through [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or call toll-free (877) 322-8228. The free report does not include your credit score; you must pay a fee to obtain it.

**Get the Best Deal.** Shop around and compare. Whether you are borrowing money or making a purchase, you need to make sure you are getting the best value for your money.

**Protect your Identity.** Be very leery about disclosing any personal information, especially to unfamiliar companies requesting verification over the phone. This includes your credit card numbers and expiration dates, bank account numbers, social security number, and driver's license number. Revealing this type of information may lead to identity theft and/or unauthorized charges to your accounts.

If a business with which you have a relationship contacts you and requests this type of information, and you are not comfortable giving out the requested information, hang up and contact that business directly to verify that the contact is legitimate.

Be careful when receiving e-mails that appear to be from legitimate companies asking you for your personal information and/or asking you to click on a convenient link. Hackers use this ploy to obtain your password, login and personal information.

Finally, remember that most companies will not contact you via e-mail to request your personal information. To protect yourself against identity theft, you should periodically review your bank and credit statements, shred anything with personal identifying information before discarding it, and use a secure mailbox when mailing bills or checks.

If you believe you have been a victim of a fraud, please contact the Consumer Affairs Division, part of the Nevada Department of Business and Industry, in Northern Nevada (including Reno) at (775) 688-1800, and in Las Vegas at (702) 486-7355.

For other valuable consumer protection information, please visit the Bureau of Consumer Protection website, [www.ag.state.nv.us/org/bcp/education.htm](http://www.ag.state.nv.us/org/bcp/education.htm) and/or the State of Nevada's general fraud information website, [www.fightfraud.nv.gov](http://www.fightfraud.nv.gov)

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