



COUNTY OF YOLO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fraud Alert: Fake Check Scams

(Woodland, CA) - (November 19, 2021) – A local Yolo County general contractor recently received a text asking him to paint a house in Davis, CA. He was offered 50% upfront, much more than what he's normally offered, but it was a big job, so the offer didn't seem too out of the ordinary.

He accepted the job and received a check in the mail for over \$3000 more than he expected. The client asked him to wire the extra money to a carpenter the client hired to work on the house as well. Before wiring the money, the contractor went to the address the client gave him to assess what he would need for the job. Much to his surprise, another house painter was already there. They compared notes and realized someone was trying to scam them. They called the company managing the property, and they said the owner had never asked for the house to be painted.

This is what's called a fake check scam. Banks are required to make funds available quickly. If a check clears, that doesn't mean it's a good check. It can take weeks for a bank to find a fake check. These scammers try to get their victims to send money before the fake check bounces. Then the scam victim is on the hook to pay back the bank for the value of the fake check, bounced check fees, and they've lost the money they sent to the scammer.

Fake check scams can target anyone - business owners and consumers. They're especially common in job ads – the scammer will offer to send you a check to purchase job equipment like an advertisement to place on your car, funds to be a mystery shopper, or computer equipment. You'll also see them when selling items online. The purchaser may offer to pay extra for shipping and ask you to send the extra funds to the shipping company, or accidentally send too much and ask you to send the extra money back. Sweepstakes may also offer to pay extra to cover taxes and fees.

Never use money from a check to send funds via gift card, wire, money order, or money transfer apps. You can't get the money you send back, and the check will bounce. If someone offers to overpay you so you can send money back to them or to someone else, don't accept the check. It's almost guaranteed to be a scam. If you have any questions or want to report a fishy phone call, email, or text you've received, contact the Yolo County District Attorney's Office Fraud Hotline at 1-855-496-5632.

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