



news

Motor
Vehicle Sales Authority
of British Columbia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Scams prey upon private vehicle sellers

(SURREY, B.C. - 9 February, 2009) - Three identical reports from the Canadian Recreation Vehicle industry, each concerning identical text e-mails, have prompted a warning about predators attempting to swindle private individuals who advertise vehicles for sale.

The latest incident is a variation of a scam that prompted a warning from the Motor Vehicle Sales Authority of B.C. during 2008.

The recent occurrence involves sellers who receive an e-mail from an individual - likely an alias - using a public domain address such as Yahoo or Google. He presents himself as an agent for a buyer and makes a flat cash offer for a vehicle (in one situation, \$71,000 for a RV), a sum significantly higher than the advertised sales price, "to cover shipping and handling." The agent states that a "cashier's check" for that amount will be expressed, to be followed by the arrival of the buyer's shipper who will inspect the vehicle and finalize the sale. The seller is instructed to send the shipper the difference between the advertised sales price and the cashier's cheque to cover the transport, taxes and ownership transfer.

"What the seller will discover is that the cashier's cheque is counterfeit, but days could pass before bank clearing houses detect the problem," said VSA Deputy Registrar Ian Christman. "The scam depends upon the seller's payment for shipping and handling being received before the fraud becomes known. A simple way to protect oneself and expose the scam would be to advise the buyer that you would be pleased to have the cheque certified, following which payment to the shipper would be made."

Vehicle sellers should be aware that they will be held fully responsible by their bank for any counterfeit or NSF cheques, including fees, interest and repayment of the full amount deposited. If they receive one of these solicitations they should report it to the police, their bank or appropriate consumer agencies.

Last year, the VSA warned the B.C. public and the industry about an Internet shopper from Ghana who professes an interest in buying a specific vehicle and having it shipped to the African country. The proposal is to buy a car with a credit card, but require in advance a credit card number from the seller to cover transport charges. The scam is that credit card payments from the buyer are on stolen cards, the bad news arriving much too late from the credit card exchange, while the shipping fee, paid by the victimized Internet vendor, has long since disappeared.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Judy McRae, Manager, Corporate Services and Communications, Phone: 604-293-3521

www.vehiclesalesauthority.com