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## WORK-AT-HOME SCAMS FLOURISH AS ECONOMY CONTINUES TO FALTER

**RICHMOND, VA** As job opportunities become increasingly difficult to find, work-at-home scams are spreading like viruses on the Internet. In the past three months alone, the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) has received nearly 1000 complaints nationwide involving work-at-home scams. Victims, many of them desperate to provide for their families, are “hired” to process payments, transfer funds, or reship products. Without realizing it, these otherwise innocent individuals become part of criminal enterprises by receiving and cashing fraudulent checks, transferring illegally obtained funds or receiving stolen merchandise and shipping it to criminals. Other victims are offered employment as “mystery shoppers.” Typically, these victims are sent bogus checks that appear perfectly legitimate. After cashing the worthless checks, the victims are instructed to keep a percentage of the proceeds for themselves and wire the balance to ‘test’ a company’s services.

By following just a few simple guidelines, consumers can protect themselves. First check to see if the prospective employer has an Internet presence; be suspicious if the company doesn’t have a Web site. Also be wary if the only means of contacting the company is by email. And never give bank account, credit card or Social Security numbers to employers whose legitimacy cannot be independently verified. These numbers can be used to loot an account or launder funds.

### About NW3C

*Funded by competitive grants for over 30 years, NW3C provides a national support network for state and local law enforcement agencies involved in the prevention, investigation and prosecution of financial and Internet-based crimes. For more information, please visit our web site: [www.nw3c.org](http://www.nw3c.org)*