2026-5-16

Real Estate Scams Are Serious, But Here's a List of Other Scams You Might Encounter

Financial fraud isn't new, but the playbook has changed, and Colorado consumers are feeling the shift. Scammers today aren't just sending clumsy phishing emails or robocalls. They're using artificial intelligence, social-media breadcrumbs, and increasingly sophisticated impersonation tactics to separate people from their money and identities. The Federal Trade Commission reports more than **$10 billion** in consumer fraud losses in 2023 alone, a record that underscores how quickly the threat landscape is evolving.

At its core, financial fraud is about gaining trust and creating urgency. Criminals pose as banks, government agencies, delivery companies, even family members — anyone who can plausibly demand quick action. And they are no longer targeting only seniors and students. Anyone with a smartphone, social-media account, or online shopping habit is fair game.

In previous columns, I have written, for example, about deed forgery and how to prevent having your home stolen from you by the filing of a fraudulent deed. I also wrote about romance scams, the most extreme of which is called "pig butchering." They blend emotional manipulation with fake cryptocurrency investments. Tech support scams pop up through malicious ads or browser warnings, insisting your device is compromised. Job scams, now the second-most-reported scam category, use fake postings and bogus "recruiters" to harvest personal information and to trick applicants into laundering money.

The best defense starts with slowing down. Fraudsters rely on panic, pressure, and the illusion of authority. If someone claims to be from your bank, the IRS, or a delivery service, hang up and call the organization directly using a verified number. Never click links in unexpected texts or emails, and never share account numbers, Social Security information, or passwords with anyone who contacts you first.

It also pays to tighten your digital footprint. Review your social media privacy settings and limit what strangers can learn about your family, routines, and interests. And stay skeptical, even of voices or videos that appear real. Artificial intelligence tools now make impersonation easier than ever.

Fraud may be evolving, and so must your defenses. A few extra seconds of caution can save months of financial headaches.

Top Scams in Colorado Right Now

Deed and Title Fraud: A scammer files a forged deed to "transfer" ownership of a home — often targeting seniors, vacant properties, and rentals. Most county clerks now offer free title-alert systems because such cases are rising. See my previous column for their links.

"Grandparent" and AI-Voice Impersonation Scams: Criminals use AI-generated voices to mimic a relative in distress ("I've been arrested," "I'm hurt"). The emotional urgency is the hook.

Utility Shutoff Scams: Common in Xcel Energy territory. Callers claim your power will be cut within the hour unless you pay immediately — usually via gift cards or digital wallets.

Delivery Text Scams: Fake UPS/USPS/FedEx texts claiming a failed package attempt. The link installs malware or harvests banking credentials.

"Pig Butchering" Schemes: Victims are groomed over weeks or months — often through social media or dating apps — before being steered into fake investment platforms.

Job and Remote-Work Scams: Fraudulent "recruiters" request personal information, send counterfeit checks, or ask applicants to purchase equipment from fake vendors.

Tech-Support Scams: A pop-up falsely claims your system is infected and urges you t call a "Microsoft" or "Apple" number. Th goal: remote access and drained accounts.

Important Fraud Prevention Tips

Slow down. Scammers rely on urgenc Hang up, pause, and verify.

Independently confirm. Call your banl utility, or agency using a number from the official website — not from a text or email.

Never share codes. No legitimate busines will ask for one-time passcodes, PINs, c online banking credentials.

Lock down social media. Limit wh strangers can see about your family, travel, an routines.

Use strong authentication. Turn on mu ti-factor authentication for banking, email, an social platforms.

Be skeptical of payment demands. Gi cards, crypto, and wire transfers are red flags.

Update devices. Install security updates an use reputable antivirus tools.

Trust your gut. If something feels off– even slightly—stop the interaction.

My Previous Columns About Scams

(Read at www.JimSmithColumns.com)

4/4/26—Avoiding title theft/deed fraud

Curr RE