

News

Scammers targeting cellphones

Megan Hunt
Police reporter

THOUSANDS of dollars won in an overseas lottery may sound like a dream come true, but scammers pedalling these stories can quickly turn dreams into nightmares for victims.

One Whakatane man who thought he had won the lottery recently after receiving a text message wised up to the scam in time, but this was not the case for other Eastern Bay residents.

A text message last month sent to Harry Galvin's cell phone told him he had won hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The message was sent from a United Kingdom phone number and gave him a Gmail address to contact.

"I thought I had won lotto at first, I really did," Mr Galvin said.

Both Citizens Advice Bureau and police said the message was a scam and he wanted to warn others to help prevent anyone falling for a similar message.

Citizens Advice says scams normally begin by contacting a person through email, social media, letters, or text message and saying they have won money.

To access the prize recipients are asked to send an administration fee. These requests for money can keep coming and eventually leave the victim worse off than before.

Whakatane Community Constable Spike Dickie said as soon as the money was sent it was almost impossible to return.

"The scams come in all shapes and forms and they are getting more technical and sophisticated."

Mr Dickie said the public was generally very aware, but a small percentage of the population was still taken in.

"They are here to stay," he said. "In this modern age it's so easy to send these mes-

Look out for:

- Lottery or competitions not entered, often for overseas outfits
- Pressure to claim prizes quickly with money needed to access them
- Requests to keep the win private
- Contact email with Gmail addresses or similar, which can be set up anywhere
- Poor grammar, especially tenses, during correspondence.

sages out to a huge amount of people. "It's like a scatter gun. Most miss their target but you only need one to connect to make some money."

Another common scheme was based on internet dating, he said.

A person enters an online relationship and the scammer asks for money to visit.

One Eastern Bay single mother was duped out of \$850 for travel costs and a \$1500 phone bill after meeting a man through an online dating website last December.

An Eastern Bay couple were left \$17,700 out of pocket after they responded to a false advertisement for a cheap caravan in *Lifestyle Block* magazine.

Whakatane police Sergeant Cain Macey said the scheme was operated out of Gibraltar, a British territory at the entrance to the Mediterranean that borders Spain.

"After the money was wired the offender contacted them and asked for more money," Mr Macey said.

"The price was too good to be true, and if it looks too good it probably is," he said.

Mr Dickie recommended the consumer affairs scam watch website, where people would report new scams, and obtain advice on what to look for and what to do in the event of being taken in.



POLICE VISIT: Whakatane police, service providers, and iwi representatives show Timor-Leste police officers around Wairaka Marae.

Photo Troy Baker D0793-05

Timor-Leste police tour Eastern Bay

FOUR Timor-Leste police officers visited Whakatane on Tuesday as part of a programme to help support safe and secure communities in the south-east Asian state.

Sixteen officers visiting New Zealand were split into smaller groups, one visiting the Eastern Bay this week.

Whakatane Senior Constable Helen Hay was one Kiwi officer hosting the group.

She said they spent the morning at Tuhoē Hauora learning how police and Tuhoē work together with youth in relation to minor offending.

On Tuesday afternoon the group visited

Wairaka Marae to learn about the Rangatahi court system before returning to Tauranga that evening.

The programme was part of an agreement between the two Governments to work collaboratively to build capacity within Timor-Leste police.

BLUE STAR: Blue Light representative Ngapera Tiopira left for Australia yesterday to represent New Zealand. She was selected by police officer Kevin Raynes.

Photo Megan Hunt D0783-03



Retail spending flattens

RETAIL spending using electronic cards was flat in June 2014, following a 1.2 percent