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TENNESSEE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS WARNS OF ROMANCE SCAMS AFTER FTC RELEASES NEW DATA

Nashville- The Tennessee Attorney General's Office is warning consumers to be wary of romance-related scams after the Federal Trade Commission released new data revealing top lies told by scammers. The FTC reports scams like this cost nearly 70,000 consumers \$1.3 billion in 2022.

Most commonly, scammers tell consumers they need money because a friend or relative is sick, hurt or in jail, the data reveals. The second most reported lie was that the scammer had investment advice to share with their newfound romantic interest.

The FTC's data highlights a growing tactic used by romance scammers: sextortion. Romance scammers may convince a consumer to share explicit photos, and then threatens to share the photos with the consumer's contacts. Consumers ages 18-29 are six times more likely than older consumers to report this form of romance scam, the FTC reports.

To help consumers avoid falling victim to these scams, the FTC and the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs provide the following tips and reinforce this basic rule of thumb: Never send money or gifts to a sweetheart you haven't met in person.

If you suspect a romance scam:

- Stop communicating with the person immediately.
- Talk with someone you trust. Do your friends or family say they're concerned about your new love interest?
- Search online for the type of job the person has plus the word "scammer." Have other people posted similar stories? For example, search for "oil rig scammer" or "US Army scammer."
- Do a reverse image search of the person's profile picture. Is it associated with another name or with details that don't match up? Those are signs of a scam.

How to report a romance scam:

- If you paid a romance scammer with a gift card, wire transfer, credit or debit card, or cryptocurrency, contact the company or your bank right away. Tell them you paid a scammer and ask them to refund your money.
- If you think it's a scam, [report it to the FTC](#). Notify the social networking site or app where you met the scammer, too.

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