



NEWS RELEASE

FRAUD HITTING OUR SMALL COMMUNITIES

Living in smaller communities we tend to believe we are safe; we know our neighbors and look out for one another. Unfortunately, fraud is not restricted to urban areas-nearly everyone is at risk. Our Alliance Bank offices have seen a significant rise in fraud cases, affecting your friends and family each and every week. Our staff are trained to watch out for our clients' best interest and safety, read on to learn how you can protect yourself and your loved ones.

Crooks use clever schemes to steal millions of dollars from innocent people every year. They combine technology and old tricks to get people to send money or give out personal information. Even the sharpest of individuals can be convinced of their schemes. Some of the latest attempts have included a person that calls impersonating a grandchild in distress, love scams through online dating websites and get rich schemes passed off as "investments" or "sweepstakes". Here are some practical tips from the Federal Trade Commission to keep you (and your money) safe:

- 1. Spot Imposters.** Scammers often pretend to be someone you trust, such as a family member or government entity. Don't respond immediately to an unexpected request via text, phone or email. Stop, think and call back to a number you know is genuine if you think the request may be honest.
- 2. Do online searches.** Use your favorite search engine to search for a company name or a phrase that describes your situation, like "IRS call." You can also search for phone numbers to see if they have been reported as scams.
- 3. Don't trust caller ID.** New technology makes it easy for scammers to fake caller ID information, so the name and number you see aren't always real.
- 4. Don't pay upfront for something promised.** Scammers may promise you prize money or a fictitious love interest might say they will visit you, if you send them money. Most likely, they will take the money and disappear.
- 5. Consider how you pay.** Credit and debit cards have significant fraud protection built in, but some methods do not. It can be nearly impossible to get money back when it is wired through a Bank or a service like Western Union or MoneyGram. Reloadable cards and gift cards are also difficult to recover. These methods will not be required by reputable entities.

6. **Talk to someone.** Scammers can be convincing and they make the situation seem urgent so you will make a quick decision; they may even threaten you. Talk to someone you trust before giving out your personal info or sending money.
7. **Hang up on robocalls.** If you answer the phone and hear a recorded pitch, hang up. These calls are illegal. Do not attempt to be taken off of their list; that could lead to even more calls.
8. **Be skeptical about free trial offers.** Always research the company and read the cancellation policy. Keep a close eye on your monthly statements as these companies will bill you every month until you cancel.
9. **Don't deposit a check and wire money back.** Uncovering a fake check can take weeks. If you deposit a bad check and send the money back out, you will be responsible for repaying the bank.
10. **Sign up for free scam alerts from the FTC at ftc.gov/scams.** If you post a scam, report it at ftc.gov/complaint. Your reports help bring crooks to justice and protect future victims.

The bottom line is that no one is safe from fraud. Always stop, think and ask a trusted person before providing personal information or sending money. Single adults and the elderly are particularly at risk; keep in close contact with your loved ones.

Alliance Bank is a locally-owned bank, proud to serve the communities of Francesville, Monon, Monticello, Otterbein, Oxford, Rensselaer, Winamac and the surrounding area. For more information visit www.myalliancebank.com or call 219.567.9151.