



## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### ***SCAM ALERT: Real Lottery Wins Don't Begin With a Text or a Surprise Phone Call***

*Watch Out for Fraudulent Calls, Texts, Emails and Requests for Fees*

**SACRAMENTO** – The California Lottery is warning players about common lottery scams, following an uptick in reports, made by both local law enforcement agencies and likely victims, to the California Lottery's security and law enforcement team. Scam artists may pose as Lottery officials or claim connections to Lottery winners to steal money or obtain personal information.

A common scam starts with an unexpected, official sounding email, phone call, or message congratulating the recipient on "winning" a prize from the California Lottery. The message may claim the prize cannot be released until taxes, processing fees, or other charges are paid, and often pressures the recipient to act quickly.

***This is a scam.***

The California Lottery does not send unsolicited emails, direct messages, texts, or calls and never ask winners to pay fees or taxes in advance to claim a prize. Legitimate prizes can only be claimed after a player purchases a ticket and submits an official claim form through the [California Lottery's established process](#).

The California Lottery Security and Law Enforcement Division works with local and state authorities to investigate reports of criminal activity and to protect the integrity of Lottery operations. Scam tactics can involve impersonation of Lottery winners or representatives, false guarantees of winnings, or demands for payment up front to collect winnings.

#### ***Things You Should Know:***

- The California Lottery **never** charges taxes or fees to claim a prize and never asks for money up front.
- A Lottery official would **never** contact a player about winning a prize before an official claim form is filed.
- There is **no way** to win a California Lottery prize without playing a California Lottery game.



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- Never share credit card information, bank account information, Social Security numbers or other sensitive information with anyone claiming to offer Lottery prizes.
- Only purchase Lottery tickets from one of the over 23,000 authorized California retailers. California Lottery games are **not** authorized for sale online or through mobile apps.
- Citizenship status is not a factor when it comes to winning and claiming a California Lottery prize purchased in person from an authorized retailer.

If you suspect any fraudulent activity or have questions about prize claims, they can all be reported to the Lottery's customer service line at 1-800-LOTTERY (1-800-568-8379) Monday to Friday between 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., or send an email to [customerservice@calottery.com](mailto:customerservice@calottery.com).

## ***Prize Claim Verification Process***

California Lottery prizes of significant value must undergo a [standard claims](#) review before payment. The process includes verification by Lottery security and law enforcement officials to ensure prizes are awarded to rightful winners. After the winner comes forward and the review is completed, a process that generally takes six to eight weeks, the prize is released. This review process helps safeguard the integrity of the Lottery.

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The mission of the California Lottery is to raise additional funding for public education, helping to supplement school budgets for K-12 as well as colleges and universities. The California Lottery has raised more than \$48 billion for public schools through the responsible sale of its games since 1985. Lottery funding for schools is largely discretionary, so administrators and educators can use Lottery money for instructional programs and services they may not otherwise afford. The California Lottery features eight [draw games](#) and dozens of new instant [Scratchers](#) games each year. More than 95% of California Lottery sales revenue goes back to the community in the form of prize payments, [retailer commissions and bonuses](#), and contributions to education. More information about who benefits can be found [here](#). As jackpots rise, the California Lottery would like to remind players that gambling should be fun. Borrowing money to play, spending above a person's budget, or using money intended for other purposes can ultimately lead to significant problems for players and their families. If a player recognizes that they have a gambling problem or if someone knows of someone who may have a problem, the Lottery recommends calling the California Problem Gambling Help Line at 1-800-GAMBLER.

