



Consumer Affairs Tabloid



Keeping you in the "KNOW"

287- CITY

Army Community Service Financial Readiness Branch

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From the Files of Fort Hood's Consumer Affairs Office

I've decided to mix it up a bit for this issue of the Consumer Affairs Tabloid. In the past we've covered a multitude of consumer & financial subjects to include auto repairs, budgeting, credit, debt repair, electric providers, fraud, government consumer sites, insurance, how to effectively resolve problems, identity theft, and so on.

Now I want to let you in on a little secret - how you can stay abreast of the latest scams, warnings, and frauds. It's all at your fingertips and with a few clicks of the mouse you can become a savvy consumer and amaze your friends and family with your expertise. You do share the Consumer Affairs Tabloid with everyone, right? Believe it or not, some people have never heard of it or any of the sites I am going to mention.

A number of agencies and consumer protection groups have news alerts on their websites where they list warnings about companies which are taking advantage of people or if government action is being taken against a business. I am going to list a few of these sites and include the headlines of their current news and alerts. You may have never heard of the companies mentioned; however, the same types of scams are run by a number of businesses. Alerts can increase your awareness and prevent your chances of becoming a victim.

When you click on the links you will see they also discuss other non-consumer issues. You have an option on the websites to look at previous month's alerts as some of the sites change their current alerts each month and the ones listed below may be archived.

Excerpt from the Texas Attorney General.
News Releases www.oag.state.tx.us/oagNews/index.php



02/20/2009. Consumer Alert: Beware Of Unsolicited Calls, E-mails Claiming To Be From American National Bank In Mount Pleasant

*Bank customers have reported receiving text messages, spam e-mails and phone calls requesting account information. Key points to remember - legitimate banks do not call or e-mail customers seeking this information

02/13/2009. Attorney General Abbott Charges Investment Plan Owners With Securities Act Violations

*Investors were told that their investments were guaranteed, had little or no risk, and would deliver up to a 10 percent annual return on the investment. Company is charged with committing multiple violations of the Texas Securities Act.

02/11/2009. Attorney General Abbott Launches Restitution Program For Countrywide Customers

*Countrywide encouraged homeowners to accept loans they could not afford, failed to fully disclose risky loan terms to borrowers, and wrote loans for unqualified borrowers in an effort to increase market share.

**Excerpt from the Better Business Bureau
Press Releases**



www.austin.bbb.org/WWWRoot/SitePage.aspx?site=40&id=53d97e1f-5dba-40ce-bd4b-b5c114e98532

2/20/2009. BBB Warns Work-at-Home Scams May Seem Tempting During Tough Economic Times

*Discusses various types of work at home scams and includes warning signs.

2/11/2009. Online Computer Store Targeting Soldiers at Fort Sam Houston

*Booths are set up at malls which lure soldiers into buying laptops at for at least twice what they could buy at a retail store. BBB wants to warn all servicemen and women to be cautious about responding to any business offer before thoroughly investigating it.

2/12/2009. Online Pawnshop Doesn't Pay Up

*Company's websites operate like online pawnshops where consumers can sell their used DVDs and video games for extra cash. The problem is - consumers say they're not getting paid what they were promised or they're not getting paid at all.

**Excerpt from the Federal Trade Commission
Newsroom www.ftc.gov/opa/index.shtml**

February 18, 2009. Court Bars Global Marketing Group from Payment Processing

*Companies debited funds from consumers' bank accounts, deducted processing fees, then forwarded the rest to deceptive Canadian telemarketing firm which sold non-existent credit cards to U.S. consumers.

February 11, 2009. FTC Sues Mortgage Foreclosure "Rescue" Operation

*The Federal Trade Commission has charged a mortgage foreclosure "rescue" company with falsely claiming that it will stop foreclosure or fully refund consumers' money.

February 9, 2009 FTC Targets Weight-Loss Marketers' Allegedly Bogus 'Free' Sample Offers

*Two dietary supplement marketers lured consumers on the Internet with allegedly deceptive weight-loss claims and bogus "free" sample offers. They then debited customer's bank accounts or charged their credit cards for continuing shipments without their consent. The companies have agreed to settle Federal Trade Commission charges that they violated federal law.



Other Sites Of Interest

Federal Bureau of Investigation: www.fbi.gov/becrimesmart.htm & www.fbi.gov/rss/pressrel.xml

United States Postal Inspection Service <https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov/>

Back issues of the Consumer Affairs Tabloid are available on the Financial Readiness section of the ACS website at www.hoodmwr.com/acs.

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