



## financial intelligence centre REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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### **SCAM LETTERS: WARNING TO PUBLIC**

**Monday, 21 January 2013**

The recent holiday period was anything but a time of rest for criminals trying to scam unsuspecting members of the public out of their hard-earned cash.

“We are aware of an upsurge in scam letters purporting to be sent out by the Financial Intelligence Centre during the December/January period,” explains Murray Michell, the Director of the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC). “Most commonly, these e-mailed letters appear to be from the FIC since the name of our organisation and an official-looking logo appears at the top of the letter. The recipient is advised that money is due to be paid over to him/her and that he/she should contact someone named in the letter to activate the payment. In most instances, the person to be contacted is not in South Africa.”

Michell urges members of the public to be very cautious about responding to such e-mails – or to similar SMSs or telephone calls. “It is highly unlikely that any of us will suddenly acquire large amounts of cash without knowing anything about this beforehand. In the real world, unexpected windfalls may arise from winnings in a competition you have entered, a visit you made to a casino, or an inheritance after the death of a family member, but it is not at all likely that you will qualify for millions of rand on the basis of an e-mail received from someone you do not know and from a source you have absolutely no idea about,” he explains.

The money you are told you will be receiving is never paid over immediately. Generally, if you reply to the letter, you will at some point be asked to pay over a smaller sum of money as a deposit or to cover some costs. If you fall for the trick and pay over the sum demanded, you will never hear from the people again. In this case, you would have lost the money paid over, as well as never seeing any of the large sums you were initially promised.

Sometimes, victims of these scams are also asked to provide personal details, such as ID or passport numbers, bank account details, and so on. “Never fall into the trap of parting with this sort of information to anyone, especially someone you do not know,” Michell warns.

The FIC warns members of the public to be vigilant regarding these scams. The best route to take is to ignore the message and delete it from your computer or your mobile phone. Remember, if the message sounds like a way to make easy money and too good to be true, it should not be trusted!

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**Note to editors:** The Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) was established in 2003, through the promulgation of the Financial Intelligence Centre Act 38 of 2001 (FIC Act), with the purpose of identifying the proceeds of unlawful activities and combating money laundering and financing of terrorism. The organisation collects and analyses data sourced from reports submitted by accountable and reporting institutions. Where necessary, the FIC provides this analysis to the law enforcement authorities and the South African Revenue Service for further follow up. The FIC works closely with counterparts on the African continent as well as with international organisations. The FIC enhances levels of business compliance to the FIC Act, thereby reducing the possibility of financial and accountable institutions being exploited by criminal networks, which is core to enhancing the integrity of the country’s financial system. Amendments to the FIC Act were announced on 1 December 2010, which gave the supervisory bodies and the FIC powers of inspection and enforcement of the FIC Act and Regulations.

Some statistics from the 2011/12 Annual Report of the Financial Intelligence Centre:

- 14 054 accountable and reporting institutions were registered with the FIC
- 5.5 million Cash Threshold Reports were received by the FIC during the reporting period
- 53 506 Suspicious Transaction Reports were filed with the FIC during the reporting period, an increase of 45% on the number filed in the previous year
- 520 inspections were carried out
- The FIC experienced a 71% increase in requests for support in investigations from other organisations
- 761 matters identified by the FIC were referred to investigating agencies.

**Issued by the Financial Intelligence Centre: [www.fic.gov.za](http://www.fic.gov.za)**

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