

Scams in



Scam artists bloom in summer

By Catherine Blalock
Staff Reporter

When temperatures increase, many people head to their favorite vacation spots. Among the many travelers this summer will be scam artists.

Scams tend to increase in the summer because travel is more accessible, Officer Brian Jackson of the Lincoln Police Department said.

"A lot of people who commit these crimes are traveling," he said.

Current scams plaguing the city are bank, roofing, driveway repair and pigeon drop scams.

On July 20, a bank scam was started. A person began calling people throughout Lincoln, asking for information about their accounts. No one has lost any money, Jackson said, because people seemed to catch on pretty quickly to this one.

An elderly couple in the 34th Street and South Street areas was not so lucky. On July 12, a man defrauded them out of about \$1,000.

The man told the couple after looking at their roof that it need immediate attention or the rain would leak through, LPD Sgt. Ann Heermann said.

He told the couple he would only charge them for building materials, she said.

After spending only 30 minutes on the roof, the man left and cashed the check at a nearby bank using a Mississippi driver's license, Heermann said.

After an investigating officer looked at the roof, he found that the individual had spread a small amount of tar-like substance around the shingles and chimney, she said.

Police are looking for a 5'10", slim build, dark-complected, brown curly-haired man driving a newer red pickup.

Summer months also attract the common driveway scams. A person will show up at one's door, offer to blacktop the driveway, charge a high price and it all washes away after it rains, Jackson said.

The blacktop material used is actually motor oil, he said.

Pigeon drop scams can also be found in summer and winter months.

Someone will approach an individual after leaving a grocery store, department store, etc., and tell them that a drug deal just occurred in the parking lot and a purse full of money was left behind, Jackson said.

Another individual will approach saying that they saw the same thing. The two will then ask if you want to split the money with them. But to make sure it's legal they will go into another building and claim to talk to

an attorney.

Upon returning they will say it's legal but everyone needs to put up "good faith" money. The victim will then withdraw all savings and everyone will take off with the money, he said.

People tend to fall for this scam because the people are smooth-talking and tell the victim that it's dirty money because it was obtained illegally, Jackson said.

If you have been a victim of any of these scams or have any information, contact the LPD.

Scams like these have not been a problem on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus, because generally people running these scams want to get rich quick and students do not have the funds available, Sgt. Bill Manning of the UNL police department said.

"Students are not a legitimate target," he said.

Some of the things to keep in mind to avoid being a victim when hiring a contractor are to check references, talk to friends and remember that most contractors do not go door to door. Also never pay the full amount up front, never give out information about a bank account over the phone and if it sounds too good to be true it probably is, Jackson said.