



When Dating Online, Do Not Send Money to People You Have Not Met In Person

Western Union Promotes Online Safety This Valentine's Day

LONDON, (February 06, 2014) – This Valentine's Day, Western Union advises consumers to watch out for the worrying rise of the cyber blackmailing "sextortion" scam, a particularly dangerous online dating scam.

Typically with this scam, the perpetrator engages the victim in conversation on an online dating chat room. They befriend and flirt with the victim, next suggesting the conversation should continue on a popular social media site. Following this the fraudster invites the victim to an internet video chat and encourages them to perform a sexual act. Immediately afterwards, the victim is contacted and informed that the act has been recorded and will be posted on an internet video social media site unless money is transferred via Western Union.

"Scam artists tend to take advantage of their victims' emotions, and victims may be all the more vulnerable to this type of scam around Valentine's Day," said Peter Barnes, Senior Manager Global Investigations at Western Union. "Consumers must be aware that anything they do on the internet can be recorded and used for malevolent purposes. People should never agree to a video call with someone they do not know."

Online dating scams come in several forms, and while many people find true love via online dating sites, there are red flags to watch for that may indicate a victim is dealing with a scammer. Beware of anyone who:

- Asks to talk or chat on an outside email or messaging service, as this allows fraudsters to carry out scams without the dating site having a record of the encounter
- Claims to be from the U.K. but is currently travelling, living or working abroad
- Asks you for money or credit card information
- Sends you emails containing questionable links to third-party websites

"We would encourage people to be especially careful when engaging online with individuals they have met only via social media and never in person," added Mr Barnes. "This is particularly true if someone requests money – even for seemingly innocent reasons. You wouldn't send cash in the post to someone you don't know, so apply the same rules to a money transfer service."

Western Union provides a trusted and reliable way for people to send money to family members and friends but should not be used to send money to someone you have not met in person. For more information, you can also visit <http://www.westernunion.co.uk/gb/consumer-protection>.

About Western Union

The Western Union Company (NYSE: WU) is a leader in global payment services. Together with its Vigo, Orlandi Valuta, Pago Facil and Western Union Business Solutions branded payment services, Western Union provides consumers and businesses with fast, reliable and convenient ways to send and receive money around the world, to send payments and to purchase money orders. As of September 30, 2013, the Western Union, Vigo and Orlandi Valuta branded services were offered through a combined network of approximately 515,000 agent locations in 200 countries and territories and approximately 115,000 ATMs. In 2012, The Western Union Company completed 231 million consumer-to-consumer transactions worldwide, moving \$79 billion of principal between consumers, and 432 million business payments. For more information, visit www.westernunion.com.

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