

FBI alerts to scam on Kelly Blue Book name

WASHINGTON (10/18/11)--The latest frauds reported by the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) involve an online vehicle scam in Kelly Blue Book's (KBB) name and an auto sale fraud that victimizes a buyer twice, according to a release from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In the first scam, individuals misrepresent themselves as KBB "agents" and swindle victims out of thousands of dollars in online vehicle purchases. In the scam, the victim finds a vehicle and makes an inquiry to the seller, who requires the buyer to make the transaction through KBB's escrow-based buyer-protection plan to protect both of them. KBB, a legitimate business familiar with many credit unions and auto buyers, does not offer such a plan.

The fraudster claims the protection plan will hold the buyer's money for a five-day period while the buyer receives and inspects the vehicle. The fraudster sends the buyer a link, supposedly to the KBB site, providing details of the process.

Some victims report the fraudster sent them photos of the vehicle. Once the purchase is agreed on, the fraudster sends the buyer an official looking e-mail, claiming to be from KBB and instructing the victim to wire the payment to the KBB agent. When they contact KBB, the victims are told the transaction is a scam, and that KBB does not offer escrow-based buyer-protection plans.

In the second scam, fraudster targets an online auto buyer and hits the victim twice. The fraudster posts a nonexistent vehicle, typically a luxury or sports car, for sale on the Internet. Details of the vehicle, including photos and description, usually are lifted from legitimate websites.

The buyer, hoping for a bargain, responds and is told the vehicle is overseas. The victim is instructed to send a deposit via wire transfer to initiate the shipping process.

In a new twist to the scam, the fraudster advises the victim there's a problem with the initial wire transfer and sends the victim a cashier's check. The victim is told to cash the check and resend a second wire transfer to a different account. The victim, unaware that the check is counterfeit, follows the instructions and is duped twice.