

## BBB Report Reveals 2018's Riskiest Scam

### Column

*By Lauren Galley, Regional Director, Bryan/College Station Better Business Bureau*

Each year, Better Business Bureau compiles data from Scam Tracker to create the BBB Scam Tracker Risk Report. Using an algorithm that considers three important factors (exposure, susceptibility, and median loss), the Risk Report can accurately determine which scams pose real threats to consumers. The 2018 Risk Report was launched on March 6<sup>th</sup> and sheds some light on the changes seen in the last year.

With a total of 50,559 scams reported in 2018, BBB saw a 5.7% increase in reports from 2017, along with an 86.7% increase in susceptibility. Luckily, there was some good news. Median dollar amount loss came in at \$152, decreasing 33.3% from 2017. The report also lists which scams proved themselves to be the riskiest to consumers during 2018. So, the question on everyone's mind is, "which scam is the riskiest?" The answer may surprise you.

The scam that came in on top for 2018 was employment scams. Employment scams are equally dangerous for both men and women, as well as half of the age groups that were studied. They were also the biggest scams for victims that reported having either military/veteran or student status. The top five riskiest scams were:

- **Employment scams.** Victims receive offers for high paying jobs, often with flexible hours and ability to work remotely. They fill out paperwork asking for much of their personal information and are asked to buy "equipment" with what turns out to be a fake check.
- **Online purchase scams.** In some cases, a consumer buys a product which never arrives. In other cases, a seller receives fake payment for an item.
- **Fake check scams.** The scammer sends a check with an "accidental overpayment" and asks the consumer to wire back the extra money. Weeks later, the bank will discover the check is fake, and the consumer owes the withdrawn funds to the bank.
- **Home improvement scams.** Door-to-door solicitors offer quick, cheap repairs, and then either take payments without returning, or eventually "find" problems and dramatically raise the price.
- **Advance fee loan scams.** A loan is "guaranteed" but comes with upfront charges like taxes and "processing fees". Once these charges are paid, the loan never appears, and the victim is left with larger debts than before.

The best weapon consumers have against scammers is education. The more they learn about fraud and being safe consumers, the better the odds are of avoiding scams like these. Every report to Scam Tracker helps both consumers and legitimate businesses recognize the signs and learn how to stay secure. To view the full, in-depth report, visit [bbb.org/ScamTrackerRiskReport](http://bbb.org/ScamTrackerRiskReport), and for general tips on protecting yourself from most scams, go to [bbb.org/AvoidScams](http://bbb.org/AvoidScams).

*Lauren Galley is the Regional Director for the Bryan/College Station office of Better Business Bureau serving the Heart of Texas. Lauren is available for media interviews and speaking engagements. You can reach her by phone: (979) 777-1263 or email: [lgalley@bryan.bbb.org](mailto:lgalley@bryan.bbb.org).*