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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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International Mail Fraud Scheme Identified

Consumers should contact the Idaho Department of Insurance Fraud Division if they receive what appears to be a \$4,500 check from Nationwide Insurance

BOISE ID (October 7, 2009) – The Idaho Department of Insurance and Attorney General Wasden are warning Idahoans of an international mail fraud scheme and to be on the alert and protect themselves from becoming victims of fraud.

Consumers in as many as 10 states have reportedly received counterfeit checks bearing the Nationwide Insurance name. Each check has been issued in the amount of \$4,500 and has been accompanied by a letter which informs the recipient that they are the winner of a \$150,000 “Consumer Promotion Draw” organized for consumers who shop in major stores in the US, Canada and United Kingdom. The letter goes on to explain the \$4,500 check has been issued to cover the “Non-Resident Government Tax” the consumer will have to pay to a British Tax Officer. The individuals generating the correspondence and counterfeit checks have no affiliation with Nationwide and are fraudulently using the Nationwide name.

In order to receive the \$150,000 prize, recipients are told they must cash the check and then forward \$3,750, by MoneyGram International or via a Western Union Money Transfer, to an address located in the United Kingdom. While consumers are provided with a toll-free number to call, they are urged to keep the matter confidential until their claim has been processed.

Department Director Bill Deal said, “Consumers should avoid these unsolicited checks because they stand to lose a great deal of money. In this particular situation, if a consumer were to cash the fraudulent check, they could find themselves owing the bank between \$3,750 and \$4,500.”

“This is a variation of a scam that we see frequently,” Attorney General Wasden said. “If you have to pay money to get a prize, you haven’t won anything, but you are likely to lose a great deal.”

The Department and Attorney General Wasden would like to provide Idahoans with the following tips so they do not find themselves victims of a mail fraud scheme:

- Do not respond to sweepstakes or contests that require you to send money in order to collect a prize.
- If an offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Be skeptical of any correspondence offering you the opportunity to win a large sum of money in exchange for specific information.
- Be leery of checks received from companies you do not do business with. The check is most likely fraudulent.
- If the name of a well known company is noted on the correspondence received, contact the company to verify the legitimacy of the letter.

The Department and Nationwide are investigating who may be behind this scheme to defraud consumers. Idahoans who receive or have received what appears to be a \$4,500 check from Nationwide Insurance should immediately contact the Department of Insurance Investigations Section at 1-866-939-7226 or the Nationwide Customer Relations Department at 1-800-882-2822.

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