



# Neighborhood Watch Newsletter

## Beware of Green Dot Money-Pak Scams

Reloadable debit cards, especially the top-selling, legitimate Green Dot cards are the new money-moving method of choice for scammers.

Scams of all kinds have historically involved the victim wiring cash to a stranger, but now that many consumers have gotten wise to this fact, scammers have found a new way for them to pay them.

They're called Green Dot Money-Pak cards. They're reloadable debit cards, available everywhere, and you can use them to pay your phone, cable, or credit card bill. They're typically for people who don't have, or want, bank accounts.

Scammers like them because they're more convenient than a money wire, but just as un-traceable.

Victims have been reporting receiving unknown calls from persons claiming

that they are from (Enter Name of any Business USA). The callers claim that the persons they have called owe money and need to pay immediately or legal actions will be taken against them.

The callers then claim that the same persons should buy Green Dot prepaid cards at Wal-Mart, Walgreens, Money-Pak or at other large major retail locations, and provide them with the numbers.

In many cases the caller is posing as an IRS Agent or as a representative from a local utility company. In most cases, the caller threatens Jail time or service disconnection, which of course can be diverted upon receipt of payment.

Other scams involve the promise of "extra money-Such as employment as a mystery shopper or even the "lucky" recipient of a Government Grant.

The con itself is a type of advance payment scam in which victims receive a check with a request that they pay part of the payment back to cover some mythical fees, using a Green Dot Money-Pak.

To add to the effectiveness of this con, the scam artists use another trick to delay their discovery. They use "legitimate" checks from active verifiable bank accounts – either stolen or forged.

This means that banks may accept them without query and the money may even show up in victims' accounts. A few weeks later, their bogus status is revealed – by which time the victim has bought the Money-Pak and sent the details to the scammer.



## To avoid falling for Money-Pak scams, consumers should:

Be wary of websites or Craigslist advertisements linking to websites where customers are specifically asked to pay with a Money-Pak card.

Never give your Money-Pak number to someone you don't know.

Remember that advance -fee loan offers are illegal and targeted at customers and companies struggling with debt and poor credit.

Remember that if you're told you have pay to a fee – via Money-Pak or wire transfer – to collect a cash prize or sweepstakes winnings, you're being scammed.

Avoid offers that don't accept credit card payments and require you to purchase a Money-Pak and provide the card number via email or by phone.

Beware of websites requesting Money-Pak as a form of payment even if they display the Money-Pak or Green Dot logo. Consumers should check [www.moneypak.com](http://www.moneypak.com) for a list of approved Money-Pak partners.

Treat your Money-Pak cards like cash. Unlike credit cards, Money-Pak transactions can never be reversed.

The Green Dot Corporation is well aware of the problem and

warns consumers on the homepage of their site to beware of scams involving Money-Pak cards.

The company's homepage also provides a link to a separate page with tips on avoiding Money-Pak fraud, as well as details on a number of common scams.

Consumers who have been scammed by fraudulent offers involving Green Dot Money-Paks should contact their local law enforcement and file a claim, as well as complain to their state's consumer protection bureaus and the Federal Trade Commission.

## Important Numbers

**Better Business Bureau**  
**(703) 276-0100**

**FBI**  
**(310) 477-6565**

**Federal Trade Commission**  
**(202) 326-2222**

**Internal Revenue Service**  
**(800) 829-1040**

**Whittier Police Department**  
**(562) 567-9200**