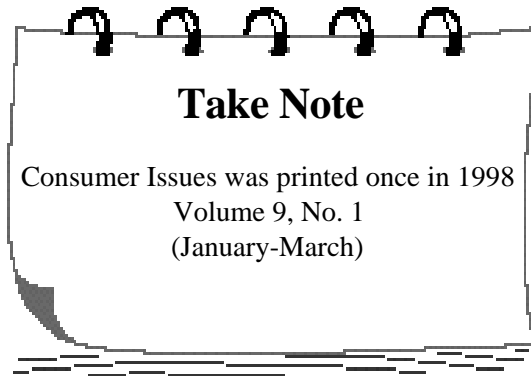


▼ *Consumer Issues*

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Federation of America, National Consumers League, National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators, American Association of Retired Persons, and the National Association of Attorneys General.

The topic is Credit Fraud and the theme is *Know the Rules, Use the Tools*. The 1999 NCPW activities will focus on forms of credit fraud i.e., advance fee loan scams to home equity fraud, “pay day” loans to rent-to-own abuses, identity theft and credit-repair flimflams. Credit fraud can target consumers of all ages and financial status and its affects can be devastating, not only to victims’ wallets but their physical and emotional well-being.

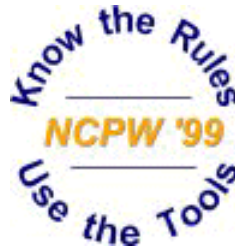
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Celebrate National Consumer Protection Week

February 1-7, 1999

Several federal agencies and consumer organizations have combined efforts to promote the first National Consumer Protection Week

(NCPW), February 1-7, 1999. Involved in this effort are the Federal Trade Commission, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Consumer



For a list of 10 Ways to Promote National Consumer Protection Week, go to the following website:

<http://www.consumer.gov/ncpw/promote.htm>

What's Inside

- ◆ **Celebrate National Consumer Protection Week**
- ◆ **U.S. Treasury Securities More Affordable**
- ◆ **Spamming, Cramming, and Slamming**
- ◆ **Direct Deposit**
- ▲ **New Year's Resolutions**

As of August, 1998, all Treasury bills, notes and bonds will be sold and transferable in increments of \$1,000. Previously, Treasury bills were available in minimum purchase amounts of \$10,000 and notes with maturity dates of four years or less required a minimum purchase of \$5,000. Notes with longer maturity dates and 30-year bonds were already available in \$1,000 amounts.



<u>Treasury Type</u>	<u>Maturity Dates</u>
Bills or T-Bills	Less than a year (13, 26 or 52 weeks)
Notes	2,3,5 or 10 years
Bonds	11-30 years

For more details on how to buy treasury bills or notes by telephone or the Internet go to:
<http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov./sec/sectrdir.htm>

Spamming, Cramming, and Slamming

Are you confused by new terms used to describe unscrupulous business practices? Your confusion may be due to the fact that the words sound similar. The definitions below may help.



Spamming-sending mass, unsolicited email advertising.

Consumer action: To decrease or eliminate electronic junk mail, send the e-mailer a reply with the word "REMOVE" in the subject line.

**Life is 10% what you make it
and 90% how you take it**

companies may serve as billing agents for many long distance and information service providers. Invalid or unclear charges can occur when a long distance telephone company or an information service provider sends inaccurate billing information. Examples of unclear or invalid charges on customers' telephone bills include:

- Charges for calls that were not made by the consumer or that were placed to a toll-free number.
- Charges for services that are explained only in general terms, such as voice mail or "calling plan" or "memberships".
- Charges identified as "monthly fee" that appear on a monthly basis.

Consumer action:

Read the fine print before signing up for any services and keep a written record of telephone services you have authorized. Review your telephone bill carefully each month. If you find any unauthorized charges, complain immediately and request that the charges be removed.



Slamming—occurs when your long distance telephone service provider is switched to another carrier without your knowledge or consent.

Consumer action: Carefully read all promotional materials and forms BEFORE signing, including sweepstakes, contests, promotional checks or other marketing tools used to induce consumers to authorize a carrier switch.

Additional details on these topics can be located found at the following websites:

slamming: http://www.fcc.gov/ccb/consumer_news/bestcall.html

cramming: http://www.fcc.gov/bureaus/common_carrier/factsheets/cramming.html

Top Scams

The top five scams for the first six months of 1998 were:

1. Cramming—billing consumers for optional services they did not order.
2. Slamming—phone service switched to another carrier without your consent.
3. Advance Fee Loans—empty promises of personal or business loans, requiring payment of fees in advance.
4. Sweepstakes—Phony prize awards that require payment of fees first—and never appear.
5. Work-at-home scams—Kits sold to stuff envelopes, make jewelry, or perform other work for profits that never materialize.

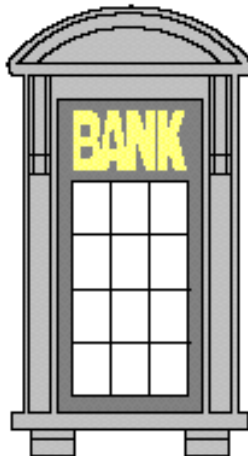
Stay alert in 1999.

Source: National Consumers League Bulletin, May/June 1998.

Direct Deposit

What is direct deposit?

Direct deposit is an electronic payment method that sends your money (paycheck or benefit check) directly to your account at a bank, credit union or savings and loan. It is safe and convenient way to receive your pay check or federal govern-



What are some advantages of using direct deposit?

- a. You avoid waiting in lines for service at a financial institution, especially at busy times during the month.
- b. You don't have to wait for mail delivery or be home on delivery dates.
- c. There are no paper checks to be lost, stolen or misplaced.
- d. You and your money will be safe.
- e. You can take money out of your account as needed instead of having the entire amount in your purse or wallet all the time.
- f. In a nutshell, direct deposit is simple, safe and secure.

How can I get direct deposit?

First, establish an account at a bank, savings and loan or credit union. It can be a savings account or a checking account. Then contact the agency that issues your federal government payment and tell them you would like to start direct deposit. If you want your paycheck to be direct deposited, check with your employer to see if that option is available to you.

Federal Paying Agencies

Social Security	1-800-772-1213
Veterans Affairs	1-800-827-1000
Office of Personnel Management	1-888-767-6738
Railroad Retirement Board	1-800-808-0772

have different types of accounts and there may be fees or minimum account balances that must be maintained to avoid the fees. Ask bank tellers to explain **all** options so you can select the one that is best for you. If you are interested in avoiding fees or additional costs, let the teller know.

How do I know my money has been deposited into my account?

Your pay check or federal government payment is deposited to your account on the day you are scheduled to receive your benefit. For example, if you normally get your payment on the second day of each month, that is when your account will receive the direct deposit payment.

Why is there such a push for everyone to use direct deposit?

It is a convenient and less costly way to transfer money from payers to payees. The federal government and employers save money because it cost less to transfer money electronically than it does to print paper checks.

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new year with intentions of changing some aspect of their life. For example, losing weight, reading more, balancing the check-book monthly, and organizing your finances are more common resolutions or goals. Before spring arrives, many of those good intentions have been forgotten. (Yes, we've all been there and done that.)



This year, perhaps a positive focus on the human race rather than “yourself” will be the way to start and end 1999. When December 1999 arrives, you can reflect on the year and list the positive impact you’ve had on the lives of those in your home, workplace, or community. Consider these two thoughts as you work towards making a positive impact on others.

Imagine what the world would be like if everyone treated others the way you do.

*Let your conscience be your guide.
(That is, assuming you have one.)*

Happy 1999.

This file may be accessed electronically at:
<http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/casdept/familyliving/cimenu.html>