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# BULLETIN

TORRANCE POLICE DEPARTMENT

CRIME ANALYSIS

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## PIGEON DROP SCAMS

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**DETAILS:** Summarized below are some of the scams that have been reported to the Torrance Police Department in recent years; they are known as Pigeon Drop Scams. While the specifics vary crime to crime, the commonalities include mostly older female victims being approached in commercial settings (stores and parking lots) by a first suspect, then a second who appears not to know the first, but is actually working in concert with him or her, offering to share in large sums of found or inherited money or lottery winnings and being asked to show proof of their honesty and trustworthiness by putting in their own collateral or "good faith" money and/ or jewelry with which the suspects disappear after asking the victim to go into a lawyer's office, a store for an over-the-counter medication or back into the bank. Remember: "If it sounds too good to be true..."

In one incident, the victim was approached by a suspect outside a restaurant on the northeast corner of Torrance and Hawthorne. The suspect spoke limited English and claimed to have won a lottery of \$362,000.00, but was from Brazil and did not have a Social Security number. A second suspect, posing as a passerby, assisted with translation and the victim was promised a 25% cut of the winnings. Accompanied in his vehicle by the suspects, he proceeded to make three withdrawals for a total of \$35,000 from his bank account in three cities. Upon returning to his vehicle after making the withdrawal in Torrance, the victim agreed to buy medicine at the neighboring **RALPH'S** for one of the suspects who had become ill. When the victim returned with the medicine to his vehicle, the suspects along with the victim's money were gone.

In another, the suspect approached the victim outside the **ALBERTSON'S** at Artesia/ Western, told the victim she found a bag of money and that she needed assistance in finding the owner. The suspect made several phone calls to a male who advised the victim there were \$153,000 cash and nude pictures of children in the bag and that if nobody claimed the bag, the victim would receive a finder's fee worth \$63,000. The victim drove the female suspect to the **MCDONALD'S** at 182<sup>nd</sup>/ Crenshaw followed by several banks and eventually **CITIBANK** at 18505 Western where the elderly victim withdrew \$15,756 in "good faith" money to be put with the finder's fee. As the victim drove the female suspect to another location following her cash withdrawal, the female suspect stated she had to use the restroom and directed the victim to drive to the **WENDY'S** on Western Avenue. Once there, the victim parked her vehicle and the suspect went inside the restaurant with all the money, but never returned.

There was also an incident wherein the suspect approached the victim inside the **99 CENTS STORE** located at 1820 182nd St and in Spanish asked her if she knew of a place where she could deposit a large amount of money because she was leaving to her home country (possibly Ecuador) and did not want to travel with a large sum of money...by now, you know the rest.

**PLEASE CONTACT THE TORRANCE POLICE  
DEPARTMENT AT \* \* \* 310.328.3456 \* \* \* WITH ANY  
RELATED INFORMATION**