Work-at-home scams have been around for decades. It used to be that crooks advertised for these scams in newspapers. Or posted signs on telephone poles. "Make money stuffing envelopes at home." "Earn hundreds of dollars a week from the comfort of your living room." But now even the crooks have gotten high tech. They post these bogus offers on Websites. The newest wrinkle to this scam is called "reshipping fraud." The scam is simple. Crooks steal credit-card numbers, order expensive stuff on the Net, and then have it shipped to their victims. The victim receives the merchandise and then reships it to the crook, thinking they're providing a legitimate service. What they don't tell you is that it can also make you an accomplice to the crime.

I'm Detective Danielson with the Morgan County Sheriff's Office. Are you Catherine Hudson?

Yes. Is there something wrong?

I have a warrant for your arrest for grand theft larceny. I need you to step outside.

Wait, I don't understand. What's this all about? Wait. What? This is not right. You're making a mistake.

This kind of work-at-home scam is brand-new. Most local cops haven't run up against it yet. When it became obvious that this was only part of a much larger mail fraud, they called us in.

Now, I know you told your story. But let's start again at the beginning.

Things can get pretty boring at home. So I just went on-line and found this Website. It had all these ads on there for people who wanted to work from home. They were looking for people to receive shipments and forward them on to other people. It seemed harmless.

Goddard, our guy just showed. Nerdy-looking guy about late 20s. Army jacket. Step on it. He's not gonna wait around forever.

Alan, how close are you?

There's something up ahead. An accident or something. Just hang tight. Hey, I gotta get around! I'm a postal inspector. I got an emergency.
Alan, he's making a move. I'm gonna stall him.

Michele, do not move. Follow protocol and wait for me.

Hi. Nice night, huh? Did you see that accident? It took me about a half an hour to get three blocks.

Yeah.

Do you come here often? I've never seen you around here before. I'm just trying to be friendly.

I have all the friends I need. Excuse me.

Hold it. I'm a postal inspector. Put your stuff down. Put your packages down now!

These are my packages. I paid for them.

I know they're yours. Put them down on the counter now!

Reshipping is just the newest wrinkle in a line of scams that goes back nearly a century. The ads promise big money working part time at home.

You can pay 100 bucks for materials for a craft business at home. They'll send you $10 in ice-cream sticks, some photocopied instructions on how to make picture frames.

Usually, they deliver little or nothing.

And then there's my personal favorite. This said you can make $1,000 a month stuffing envelopes. Almost none of these work-at-home offers are legit.

These days, the Internet makes it even easier for these thieves to recruit new victims. They send their ads out to millions using E-mail or post them on job-seekers Websites. In some cases, they're after the type of personal information you're commonly required to give in a job application. They can use this to steal your identity. Avoiding these frauds really isn't too difficult. Just follow these tips.

One. Closely examine the ad or offer. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Two. Don't fill out a job application or give other personal information to a company or business that isn't known to you.

Three. Be suspicious of any offer that doesn't pay a regular salary or involves overseas companies. There is no legitimate job receiving and forwarding packages.

Four. If you're in doubt, check with your state attorney general's office or the local Better Business Bureau before accepting any employment offer.
If you think you’ve been the victim of these scams, you need to report it to your local United States Postal Inspector. You can find one in your phone book or on our website at USPS.COM/POSTALINSPECTORS. Reshipping may be the latest thing in fraud, but old-fashioned common sense is the best medicine for prevention.