

New FBI web site tracks cyber crooks

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By Harve Jacobs [bio](#) | [email](#)

CHARLESTON, SC (WCSC) - Lori and Michael Garnett of Ladson thought nothing of it when they decided to try to sell a computer desk on Craigslist. Their asking price was \$775. They quickly got an offer from out of state.

The buyer sent a check for \$3,225 dollars to cover the cost of the desk and shipping. He told the Garnetts to send back the difference to the shipping company.

"We thought maybe he owned the motorcycle company is where the check came from so there were really no red flags," Lori Garnett said.

The next day, Lori went to her bank and got the bad news that she was ripped off.

"Went to look at my bank account and I was minus \$1,900 and I was like what, and I called the bank and they told me the check was no good, that there was no account," she recalled.

She went on line and contacted the F.B.I.'s new Internet Crime Complaint Center. The website gets about 20,000 complaints a month. Agents try to find patterns and trends and then go after the scammers by sending leads to local police.

"This would be all kinds of cyber fraud, all kinds of schemes," said F.B.I. Supervisory Special Agent Charles Pavelites. "And these are just dots, but they represent the information that goes with them that we can use to determine trends, determine loss amounts, to determine where we should be focusing our efforts in the fight against cyber crime."

"There are many foreigners, organized crime groups, that are looking to target the U.S. financial infrastructure, because the business of the United States is on the internet," said Shawn Henry of the F.B.I.'s Cyber Division.

Lori and Michael are hoping the F.B.I. can track down the cyber crook who took them for a ride.

"I'd either like the money back which would be nice or have somebody go to jail," Lori said. "I just want somebody to pay for what they did and I don't want this to happen to other people."

Anyone can file a complaint with the Internet Crime Complaint Center. To avoid scammers' traps, don't click on links or open attachments in unsolicited e-mail, and guard your personal information.

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