



NETWORK NEWS

NETWORK NEWS IS A PUBLICATION OF CONSUMER SENTINEL, LAW ENFORCEMENT'S SOURCE FOR CONSUMER COMPLAINTS

NEW SENTINEL FEATURES.

- ✦ Later this year, you can use **View Similar Complaints** to expand the information you gather about a target. After you enter a target's name, phone number, business address or other data, click **View Similar Complaints** to see complaints that contain the names, phone numbers, addresses or other data used by your target. You may find several entities with a common phone number, web or mailing address or business name.
- ✦ Use **View Surge Results** to see spikes in fraud complaints against a target. When you start your search, choose a consumer or company address, a location and a time period (for example, the most recent six weeks or six months). Click **Get Surge Results** to show the current number of complaints against a company and previous averages and see how a target's activity level has changed. ■■■

MOD FRAUD.

Three men who allegedly used their company to deceive more than 13,000 homeowners have agreed to pay nearly \$19 million in refunds. According to the FTC, the trio behind First Universal Lending told homeowners the company would negotiate with lenders to modify their mortgages to be more affordable. The defendants charged homeowners up to \$7,000 in advance fees, but did little or nothing to help them. The FTC settlement also bans the defendants from the mortgage relief services business.

Read more. ■■■

STAT-o-SPHERE

In the last nine months, the Consumer Sentinel Network has received more than **800** complaints about services related to immigration. ■■

WHAT YOU AUTO KNOW.

The FTC mailed nearly 4,450 refund checks to consumers who were tricked by illegal robocalls into buying extended service contracts that were described as auto warranties. **The FTC alleged** that Transcontinental Warranty hired Voice Touch Inc., to blast U.S. car owners with prerecorded calls that seemed to be from their auto dealership or manufacturer, and suggested their original warranty was about to expire. Several settlements ban the defendants from telemarketing and require them to repay some \$3 million to consumers. Refunds range from a few dollars to more than \$7,000, depending upon the original payment. **Read more.** ■■■

DEALING IN DEBIT CARDS.

At the FTC's request, a federal court ordered Swish Marketing, Inc., to pay more than \$4.8 million for tricking hundreds of thousands of loan applicants into paying for an unrelated debit card. According to the **FTC's complaint**, the defendants' websites advertised short-term, or "payday," services that supposedly matched loan applicants with lenders. The websites' online application form tricked applicants into ordering a debit card for about \$54. **Read more.** ■■■

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION.

At the FTC's request, a federal judge has temporarily stopped a European-based operation that allegedly bilked millions of dollars from small businesses, nonprofit organizations and churches. According to the FTC, defendants Jan Marks, Yellow Page Marketing B.V. and their affiliates tricked small businesses into ordering – and paying for – listings in online business directories. The FTC is seeking to stop the illegal practices and force the defendants to refund money to the victims. The Canadian Competition Bureau and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission provided substantial help to the FTC on the case. **Read more.** ■■■

PARTNERS.

Thank you to the U.S. Department of Justice, Executive Office for Immigration Review, the Internal Revenue Service and the National Notary Association for referring complaints to the FTC. ■■■

SCAMS AGAINST IMMIGRANTS.

If you know someone who wants to renew a Green Card or apply to become a citizen, the FTC has a great new resource: **[ftc.gov/immigration](https://www.ftc.gov/immigration)**, which is designed to help people spot and avoid scams that target immigrants and learn where to get legitimate help. Immigration issues can be complicated, and it's important to do things right. Resources at **[ftc.gov/immigration](https://www.ftc.gov/immigration)** include a consumer alert about avoiding scams, a trifold with answers to nine essential questions about finding legal help and avoiding scams, and public service announcements in English, Spanish, Chinese and Korean. **Read more.** ■■■

NEW MEMBERS.

Federal

- ✦ Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
- ✦ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Fraud Detection and National Security Division
- ✦ Drug Enforcement Administration Special Operations Division
- ✦ Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division
- ✦ Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Investigation Division
- ✦ U.S. Department of Justice Asset Forfeiture Section

State and Local

- ✦ Office of the Utah Attorney General
- ✦ Pennsylvania Department of Revenue
- ✦ Los Angeles County Department of Consumer Affairs
- ✦ Police departments in Florida, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Wisconsin

New Data Contributors

- ✦ Minnesota Department of Public Safety
- ✦ Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs
- ✦ Western Union ■■■