

**Press release**

**27th April 2009**

**Mystery shopping scam alert**

Mystery shopping scams have been circulating in the UK, Canada and US for quite some time now; the majority have been targeting people by sending huge volumes of spam emails to random lists.

They ask the recipient to carry out one or more assignments and say they will send funds in advance - BUT the funding they use is a money order for more than the cost of carrying out the assignments. They ask the victim to send them the surplus money. Only when they have done that do they discover their bank telling them that the money order was not valid. This type of scam is a variation of the 'Advance Fee' fraud.

Mystery Shoppers Ltd have included a warning on their website with things to look out for and what to do if you are targeted. However, the scammers have become even bolder and have recently placed recruitment adverts in both local and national newspapers. The latest spam emails include Mystery Shoppers Ltd's company information to legitimise themselves.

Paul Grafton, Managing Director of Mystery Shoppers Ltd said: "They are getting very clever – we have been sent copies of scam emails which use our logo, website and office addresses to add authenticity. We've put a prominent warning on our website but that doesn't seem to have deterred them. We have even seen scam adverts in the recruitment section of some national newspapers - which raises the question, if they can afford to place a job advert in the national press they must be making a considerable amount of money from this scam."

Mystery Shoppers Ltd are urging people that have responded to these emails and advertisements to cut all communication with the scam company.

The email they send follows the same pattern as many similar scams complete with unusual use of English grammar and their email address tends to be from a yahoo or

msn email account rather than an authentic company address. Examples of these can be found on the Mystery Shoppers Ltd website: [www.mystery-shoppers.co.uk](http://www.mystery-shoppers.co.uk).

Paul concluded: "Those that are interested in becoming a genuine mystery shopper can register with us via our website. Please also be aware that reputable mystery shopping companies will never ask for a registration fee and are usually members of the Market Research Society (MRS) or the Mystery Shopping Providers Association (MSPA)."

For more details on how to become a mystery shopper and samples of typical scam emails go to [www.mystery-shoppers.co.uk](http://www.mystery-shoppers.co.uk).