

March 3-9 is National Consumer Protection Week.

Attorney General Jon Bruning recently marked the beginning of National Consumer Protection Week by joining with Better Business Bureau President Jim Hegarty and Lincoln Postmaster Kerry Kowalski to increase awareness about recent scams that are targeting Nebraskans.

In conjunction with a recent press conference, the Attorney General's Office launched a new consumer-based twitter account that can be found @NEAGConsumer.

Avoid Fraud and Scams

In 2012, the Attorney General's Office received more than 450 consumer complaints related to scams and fraud.

Common scams like fake checks, lottery letters and mystery shopper job offers may arrive via email or through postal mail.

"Phony telephone solicitations, email scams and fraudulent lottery letters all have commonalities. Each of these scams is designed to help steal from the receiver—money, personal information, or both," said Lincoln Postmaster Kerry Kowalski.

Reduce Available Information

BBB President Jim Hegarty encouraged Nebraskans to shred documents with identifying information and to utilize opt-out options to limit mail and phone solicitations.

To reduce mail solicitations, consumers can visit www.optoutprescreen.com or call 1-888-567-8688. The phone number and website are operated by the major consumer reporting companies.

Monitor Credit Reports

Bruning urged consumers to monitor credit reports regularly and noted a recent study by the Federal Trade Commission. The study showed 20 percent of people have errors on their consumer credit reports.

Each year, consumers are entitled to one free copy of their credit report from each of the three major credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion) through www.annualcreditreport.com.

If consumers fail to recognize all activity on their credit reports, the report may have clerical errors—or they may be victims of identity theft.

"It is the consumer's responsibility to alert the listing credit agency to any suspicious activity," said Bruning. "And all correction requests or suspicious activity reports should be made in writing."

For more information on these and other consumer issues, visit www.ago.ne.gov or www.bbb.org/scam-stopper/ or call the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-727-6432.