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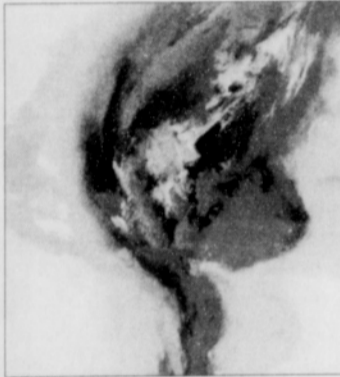


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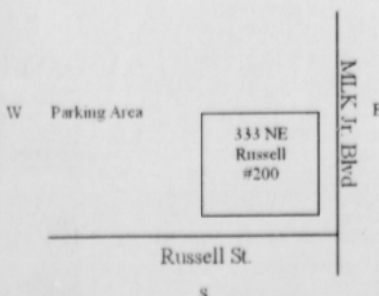
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LAW & JUSTICE

Cable, Satellite Hookups Top Complaint List

Money-transfer schemes skyrocket

(AP) -- Telephone and cable companies were the top targets for consumer complaints in Oregon last year, the fifth straight year they've led the list.

Financial institutions - banks and mortgage brokers - were again No. 2 on the annual complaint list compiled by the Oregon attorney general's office.

The surprise was the arrival of international money-transfer schemes, appearing on the list for the first time and making it all the way to No. 3.

The fraudulent schemes include a now-infamous scam with many variations, typically involving a claim that a wealthy Nigerian must move a large sum of money out of the African country and needs help with the transaction. It usually requires a loan in exchange for a much larger sum that is never paid.

Oregon residents lost more than \$482,000 in 2007 to such schemes, according to the Oregon Department of Justice.

"We're disturbed by this number for several reasons," Oregon Attorney General Hardy Myers said. "These schemes, especially out of Nigeria, have been around for years, but Oregonians continue to be pulled into these scams."

The 825 complaints filed in the category included consumers who recognized the scam before they lost money, Myers said.



Disputes over cellular phone service include cable and satellite television to top a category of consumer complaints to the Oregon attorney general's office.

Remaining at No. 4 on the top 10 complaint list were collection agencies, with the number of complaints nearly doubling from 483 in 2006 to 719 last year.

Myers noted that he has twice proposed amendments to the state Unlawful Trade Practices Act to include violations of existing debt collection law and put collection agencies under the jurisdiction of state Department of Justice consumer division. Both attempts in the Legislature have failed but Myers, who is not seeking re-election, said he will recommend that his successor try

again in the 2009 session. Rounding out the top 10 list of complaints were motor vehicle sales at No. 5, Internet retailers at No. 6, health-related claims at No. 7, construction contractors at No. 8, Internet auctions at No. 9, and automobile repairs at No. 10.

Although last on the list, automobile repairs was making a reappearance after a decade.

The attorney general's office also noted that in the telecommunications category, No. 1 on the complaint list, cable and satellite television complaints exceeded those against cellular phone providers.

Categories that almost made the list were real estate, travel and insurance services.

The Department of Justice also said it resumed enforcement of its "no call" registry last year after being pre-empted by federal law and regulations for about five years.

Oregonians are urged to register with the National Do Not Call Registry by calling 1-888-382-1222 or online at Donotcall.gov. Registration is free and most "cold calls" made to Oregonians on the list after 31 days will violate both federal and state laws.

Fred Meyer Sued for Sexual Harassment

Commission says female workers targeted

Fred Meyer Stores, Inc. violated federal law when it allowed top-level managers at its Oregon City store to sexually harass several female employees, according to a lawsuit the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The EEOC further charges that Fred Meyer retaliated against the woman who first complained internally of the harassment.

According to the agency's suit, senior-level managers subjected an employee and her female co-workers to a constant barrage of sexually offensive and degrading comments.

The company refused to take any meaningful actions to stop the harassment. Instead, the EEOC claims, Fred Meyer retaliated against the woman who first complained by stepping up the harassment against her. These actions caused severe emotional distress for the alleged victims.

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of Civil Rights Act of 1964. After first attempting to reach a voluntary settlement through conciliation, the EEOC filed

the lawsuit and will seek monetary damages on behalf of the employees, training on anti-discrimination laws, posting of notices at the work site and other injunctive relief.

According to EEOC Regional Attorney William R. Tamayo, "When you have senior-level managers engaged in the sexual harassment, the tone is set in the workplace. An employer who fails to take notice of illegal behavior in its workplace is only inviting litigation."

The EEOC enforces federal laws in the private and federal sectors prohibiting employment discrimination based on race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age and disability.

Refectory Robbers Wanted

The Portland Police Bureau, in cooperation with Crime Stoppers, is asking for your help in identifying suspects in a take-over robbery.

On Friday, Feb. 15, at 9:14 a.m., two suspects walked into the Refectory, located at 1618 N.E. 122nd Ave., forced employees to the ground and stole

money from the safe. Additionally, the suspects stole an employee's 2005 gray Jeep Liberty as their getaway vehicle. Police recovered the vehicle the next day in Fairview.

Suspect #1 is described as a white male in his 30s, 5'8"-5'10", 200 pounds, light brown hair, stubble on his face, and wearing a blue hooded jacket.

Suspect #2 is described as a white, possibly a female, in her

30s, 5'8", 180 pounds, wearing an orange and blue jacket with a white stripe across the chest and back.

Crime Stoppers is offering a cash reward of up to \$1,000 for information, reported to Crime Stoppers, that leads to the arrest in this case, or any unsolved felony, and you remain anonymous. Call Crime Stoppers at (503) 823-HELP (4357).



A police sketch identifies one of two suspects in the robbery of the Refectory restaurant.

Racial Disparities Concern U N

'Roll back' of human rights cited

A key committee at the United Nations has raised concern over racism in the United States and the government's failure to combat racial inequality.

The U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern that civil and human rights in the U.S. have been "rolled back." Problems range from racial segregation in the schools and racial disparities in the criminal justice system, to decreased access to the courts.

Recent court cases in the

United States have made it more difficult to bring discrimination claims in court, requiring proof of intentional discrimination. Under the U.N. treaty, victims of discrimination may seek justice as long as they can prove the actions had a discriminatory effect.

As the U.N. report states, "[The treaty] requires States parties to prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms, including practices and legislation that may not be discriminatory in purpose, but in effect."

The U.N. recommended that recent Supreme Court cases' "rolling back" of rights should be corrected through legislation. In repeated instances, the U.N. mentions support for the Civil Rights Act of 2008.

"The message from the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is clear when it comes to the U.S.'s record on human rights and racial equality - the government can't just talk the talk," said Jamil Dakwar, Advocacy Director of the ACLU Human Rights Program.