

## Online Romance Scams On The Rise During Covid-19 Pandemic (Khou - Houston Cbs Affiliate)

Many say love is free, but online scammers seem to think differently. The pandemic has made it easier for them to prey on the innocent.

"We are definitely seeing an increase in various online scams during the pandemic. Many (people are) working from home ... interacting from home ... because they are so isolated during these times," said Leah Napoliello, with the Better Business Bureau.

According to the bank fraud manager at PlainsCapital Bank, there has been a 35 to 40% increase in online scams to her banking customers since the start of the pandemic. The majority of the scams involve people on social media platforms and dating sites.

"(It's) One of the hardest frauds for us to investigate. Because individuals do not believe that it's fraud when there are emotions involved," said PlainsCapital Bank fraud manager Denise Owens.

Scammers trick their online significant others out of their savings, and even their unemployment benefits, by claiming they need help paying for COVID-19 related emergencies. The fraudsters groom their victims over time and gain their trust to demand what they want, whether that's cash or gift cards. The newest trend is asking their victims to commit bank fraud.

"They (the) fraudster will forward money to the victim by means of unemployment benefits or fraudulent wire or check and ask them to send those proceeds," Owens said.

But before you end up broke and with a broken heart, look for the red flags.

"And they suddenly start wanting money from you and you haven't even met them in person. Maybe you haven't done a video chat they are asking this from you. That is a big red flag," Napoliello said.

The bottom line is if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

For more information check out the links below.



### BBB Tip: Romance Scams

Don't let your quest for love blind you to the realities of romance scams. Online dating and social media have made it easier than ever to meet new people and find dates. Unfortunately, it has made scammers' work simpler, too. Con artists create compelling backstories, and full-fledged identities, then trick you into falling for someone who doesn't even exist.

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## Fraud Resource Center – Protect Your Information – PlainsCapital Bank

The PlainsCapital Bank Fraud Resource Center is here to assist you with any and all issues related to bank fraud. The Fraud Resource Center contains information on: How and when to report fraud Steps you can take to help detect and prevent fraud on your accounts Common bank fraud schemes to be aware of Leaving PlainsCapital Bank Website PlainsCapital Bank does not control the following website and their privacy policies may differ from those of the Bank.

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