

Signature Advice For Protection Against Check Washing

(NAPSA)—Now there's a good reason to question the old saying "the check is in the mail." An increasingly alarming epidemic of something called "check washing" is giving rise to numerous law enforcement task forces, including the FBI, Secret Service, U.S. Postal Service and local and federal authorities. Some \$815 million is lost each year in the United States to this kind of fraud.

Check washing is a process where checks are stolen from the mail or by other means and the ink is erased using common household products. The thieves will then rewrite the check payable to themselves, in the amount of their choosing.

Frank W. Abagnale, one of the most respected experts on identity theft and the person whose life is chronicled in the blockbuster movie "Catch Me If You Can," says prevention is the most effective strategy in counteracting check washing. Abagnale advocates using certain gel pens to protect against this escalating check washing threat, singling out the uni-ball 207 as his favorite in deterring the act.

"The best way to protect against fraud is using common sense," says Abagnale who has dedicated over 25 years lecturing and consulting on forgery, embezzlement and secure documents. "The devil is in the details all the way down to the uni-ball 207 gel pen you use. This pen is your best front line defense."

Many uni-ball gel pens use inks that contain color pigments, which are absorbed into a check's paper fibers. When an individual tries to "wash" the information written on



When paying with a check, several simple steps can help individuals protect themselves against check fraud.

the check, the ink is in effect trapped.

Abagnale who recently penned a book on securing your personal information, suggests the following for protection against check fraud:

- When giving monetary gifts, avoid sending checks in the mail. If unavoidable, make sure the check is wrapped with a sheet of paper or in a card, making the check less likely to be viewed outside of the envelope.

- Never leave mail in an unsecured mailbox. Instead, drop your outgoing mail at a post office or locked postal boxes.

- If public mailboxes are nearly full, find another secure box to drop your mail in. Thieves prey on mailboxes that fill up during the weekend because access is easy.

- Use a black uni-ball 207 gel pen when signing checks. The black ink in the 207 is bold and contains color pigments that absorb into paper fibers.

For more information on defending against check washing, individuals can go to www.uniball-na.com.