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Money-sending scam on increase, police say

By Ryan Lillis -- Bee Staff Writer

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SACRAMENTO -- Authorities have seen an increase in a variation of the so-called Nigerian scam in recent months.

The Sacramento Valley Hi-Tech Crimes Task Force said Thursday that the latest targets had advertised student housing on the Internet.

After receiving checks larger than the requested amount for rent or deposits, the victims were asked to send the overpaid balance electronically to suspects in Europe, Asia and Africa, authorities said.

Victims were later notified by their banks that the original checks were fraudulent. Victims have lost "hundreds, sometimes thousands" of dollars in the scam, said Lt. Bob Lozito of the Sacramento Sheriff's Department.

"These cases creep up when school is about to go into session," Lozito said. "Once (the suspects) find a method to milk someone, they take every nickel."

Anyone who thinks they may have been a victim of the scam can call Lozito's office at (916) 874-3030.

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