

INTERNET SCAMS & HOAXES

By Lion Frank Pickens, State Internet Chair

When was the last time you received an email from someone who **INSISTED** you must forward it to all of your friends and coworkers? If you didn't then something terrible would surely happen – a new virus would be spread, email would be taxed or our right watch TV programs with a religious theme would be restricted. Or, perhaps, an opportunity would be lost – unless you sent the email then Bill Gates would NOT be giving you new software or Michael Eisner would NOT be sending you to Disneyworld.

If you did not receive email similar to this in the past week then I'm willing to bet my quarterly Club dues you will be receiving one of these email scams within the next week or two. What should you do when you receive one of these emails and what should tip you off that it just might be a hoax?

To answer the second part of the question first you should look to see how many folks have been sent this email prior to your receipt of it. Most likely it has been sent to dozens if not hundreds of folks just like you. I ALWAYS assume an email like this is a hoax until I have taken the time to investigate the claim.

Now, as to what you should do about this email. First, check out the claim or promise by going to one of the many web sites that debunk email scams and hoaxes. One of the better sites is *The AFU & Urban Legends Archive* - <http://www.urbanlegends.com>. AOL and ICQ also have sites dedicated to hoaxes that target these organizations or their users. Believe me, the US Postal Service is NOT going to tax your email nor are the followers of Madeline Murray O'Hare going to keep you from watching Touched By An Angel.

Once you have completed your investigation then you are ready for the second step – **DON'T FORWARD THE EMAIL**. It's as simple as that – if you are unsure about the source of the email or can't prove it's veracity then just don't forward it.

Other sites to visit include: *Don't Spread That Hoax* <http://www.nonprofit.net/hoax/default.htm>

Urban Legends and Folklore - <http://urbanlegends.about.com/science/urbanlegends/>
US Department of Energy *HOAXBUSTERS* - <http://HoaxBusters.ciac.org/>

Best of luck – and please send this to all your friends!!