

# TTSEC warns of evolving investment scams



CEO of the Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission (TTSEC) Kester Guy in front of the commission's sign at its offices in Tower D, Waterfront Complex, Wrightson Road, Port-of-Spain. PHOTO BY ABRAHAM DIAZ

The Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission (TTSEC) is warning the public about emerging investment scam trends and patterns in T&T.

In a release on Tuesday, the TTSEC stated it has observed scammers developing new tactics to defraud individuals.

The release said, “Based on its market surveillance activities, the TTSEC advises the public to remain vigilant for the following signs, characteristics, and evolving tactics used by scammers such as fake profiles and false promises made on social media platforms. The TTSEC said, “On their platforms, the scammers may advertise an attractive investment opportunity to entice potential investors to invest. The advertisement may make promises of unrealistically high returns within a short period of time. For example: “Earn \$30,150 on a \$2,000 investment within 2 hours”.”

Other tactics the TTSEC noted were, “Engagement via Telegram/WhatsApp: After sending a message to the advertised page, you will be asked to provide your contact number, and the conversation will be moved to WhatsApp or Telegram. Individuals claiming to be “representatives” of the company will engage with you on the nature of the investment and give assurances of guaranteed profits or returns.”

The commission said the representatives of the company would provide bank details, asking for a deposit of funds as soon as possible while others would claim “there are no fees involved and that the funds can be withdrawn within 24 hours or some other defined period.”

However, the release noted, there may be withdrawal delays or fees that exceed \$1,000 when an attempt is made to remove money from the account.

The fraudsters, the TTSEC said would attempt to create an “illusion of legitimacy” via “a link to the entity’s investment platform (usually a website which shows various cryptocurrency investments), along with login credentials for an account made in the investor’s name. Once logged in, you may see a huge balance compared to the funds initially invested, which may signify that you have earned a significant return, either in TT dollars or United States Dollars.”

The TTSEC has noted that Artificial intelligence (AI) technology has made it easier for scammers to produce official type looking documents.

The release stated, “The scammer may produce documents that purportedly appear to come from legitimate financial institutions or official government organizations, such as the Federal Reserve Bank.

Always verify with the named entity prior to transacting. Using AI technology, the scammer may also present as high-ranking public figures by utilising photos and social media accounts that appear legitimate. These are usually fake and intended to impersonate.”

Other tactics noted were requests for sensitive information, use of third-party money transfers, funds being circulated by multiple accounts, additional fees being imposed after withdrawals and persistent calls to make payments as well as fake testimonials from investors.