



**NYPD**  
New York City Police Department

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**NYPD** Crime Prevention Division

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## Mailbox Fishing Leads to Check Washing



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**Mailbox fishing** is the process in which thieves gain entry into the interior of mailboxes and steal mail containing checks. They do this by using shoe laces, glue traps, and juice bottles.

### What can I do to prevent mailbox fishing?

- If you use a mailbox, deposit the mail as close to the scheduled pick-up time as possible.
- Drop mail containing checks directly at the Post Office or hand it directly to your mail carrier.
- Use a pen with pigmented (permanent) ink to write checks out. This ink prevents the altering of your checks.
- Consider transferring your money via other methods.

**Check washing** is a process in which thieves use common household products to alter checks they recently stole out of mailboxes. They then make the checks payable to themselves or other parties.

### What can you do to prevent your checks from being altered?

- Use a pen with pigmented (permanent) ink to write checks. The ink is not easy to alter.
- Shred any voided or incorrectly written checks.
- Check your account balance frequently to ensure checks were cleared by the establishment that you wrote them out to. Note that thieves usually re-write the check for the original amount you wrote, but simply change the payee name.

