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## BBB warns of fake award scam



Better Business Bureau

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### It's probably phony if there is fee involved

By Special To The Times Record News

Area businesses are being contacted by a "fake award, and the only qualification is paying for it," Better Business Bureau of North Central Texas president Monica Horton cautioned.

There is no doubt that businesses like to win awards, especially if the award recognizes them for providing an excellent service or product. However the Better Business Bureau has warned businesses previously about vanity awards and Who's Who type publications, Horton said.

Horton said the BBB has been contacted by several local businesses and learned that a company with apparent ties to U.S. Commerce Association was selling "2013 Wichita Falls Award."

"The company is selling similar awards in other cities. The BBB has also confirmed with the city of Wichita Falls and several other organizations in our area that there is no such award. The email communication claims to be from the Wichita Falls Award Program and has the subject '2013 Wichita Falls Award'," Horton explained. "The email states your business has won an award, and you can use the supplied digital logo and press release. You can also purchase a physical display of your award. The message states you were chosen because your business is the best. This is nothing more than a vanity pitch to take your money."

Horton said vanity pitches often target executives, writers, poets and students.

"Those who are flattered into providing details of their career or accomplishments may be stuck with a subscription fee, a membership fee, a charge for listing, an inflated price for buying the publication or a solicitation to purchase one or more copies of the publication/award," she said.

The BBB also has some tips for companies to consider if they are approached about winning an award they didn't apply for:

Learn everything you can about who is giving the award. If it is coming from a mystery company, chances are they simply want your money.

If you didn't apply for an award or the group cannot tell you how you were nominated, chances are the award is not legitimate.

Most legitimate awards do not come with costs for the recipient. If there is a cost, scrutinize it even more closely.

Ask specific questions about how your company or organization was chosen for an award and find out how many similar awards are given each year.

To contact the Wichita Falls BBB, call 940-691-1172. Its website is [www.wichitafallsbbb.org](http://www.wichitafallsbbb.org).