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Lottery Alert - February 22, 2023



NBC 5 Investigates: You Have Zero Chance of Winning the Top Prize for Several Illinois Lottery Games

NBC5 Investigates found several scratch-off tickets where all the top-tier prizes were claimed weeks ago, yet they're still for sale and marketed online

It's something the Illinois Lottery readily acknowledges. For one thing, it discloses, at [this site](#), all the top prizes that have been claimed and cashed in, for every game. And every lottery ticket has fine print on the back warning, "Instant tickets may continue to be sold even when all top prizes have been claimed."

But many people don't know about the website or don't have the means to check it whenever they want to buy a ticket. And many ticket-buyers don't see the written disclaimer until after they've bought the ticket.

"When you're buying a Mega-Millions ticket or a Powerball ticket, the odds are infinitesimal, but you have actual odds of winning," says historian Jonathan Cohen, who has written a new book, "For a Dollar and a Dream: State Lotteries in Modern America. "But

when you're buying a scratch ticket that promises a million-dollar jackpot, and it turns out that million-dollar jackpot has already been won by someone in Evanston, then you have, actually, no chances of winning ... and it's only by going on their website and scrolling down and opening up tab seven, and seeing that two of the prizes have been won – that, to me, seems just an extra level of unfairness.”

NBC5 Investigates showed these games to people outside a lottery retail store.

“**That’s a rip-off,**” said Annyce Leonard. “If someone already claimed the ticket, then why do you keep selling them just to keep people’s money?”

“**You’re deliberately – kind’ve tricking people into buying these,**” said Christine Nieves. “I think they should take them out of circulation.”

“We follow our Instant Game Closure Policy,” said Meghan Powers, spokeswoman for the Illinois Lottery. Powers told NBC5 that the lottery wants to “ensure consistency in how games are identified for clean-up and how and when our staff communicates and carries out that message.

“Clean-up occurs when the top prize tickets are claimed by the players,” Powers said. “Once a Clean-Up Memo is issued, our Lottery Sales Representatives, who regularly visit our retailers every 3-4 weeks to service them, collect tickets that are to be returned.”

Powers did not detail how long that process takes, but the **Instant Game Closure Policy** says the goal is to have “all unsold game tickets returned from retailers within 10-12 weeks after the start of the [Clean-Up] process.”

That implies that a ticket could be on sale for nearly three months with no top prizes available. [READ](#)

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