

Lottery officials working to iron out system glitches

Players hot line can address issues

By ANNE PAINE
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Glitches are continuing to be worked on as the 6-day-old Tennessee Lottery matures.

One is a problem that sometimes occurs when clerks scan winning tickets into a computerized lottery machine. On occasion, the machine says a ticket has already been redeemed for cash when it actually hasn't.

"We're having intermittent things like that happen," said Kym Gerlock, a spokeswoman for the games.

This is an operator error, she said.

After a ticket is scratched off to disclose a win, a clerk has to scan the bar code from the ticket into the machine. It takes more than a moment, she said.

If clerks are in too big a hurry, they might think the machine is not reading it and remove the ticket to try to scan it again. The machine, "seeing" the ticket a second time,

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lottery spokeswoman

reacts like a machine.

"It says it's already registered and thinks you're trying to collect twice," she said.

One option might be to put a message on the machine telling clerks to keep holding the ticket there until they get the initial read-out authorizing the payment, Gerlock said.

If a winning ticket is double scanned and the machine says it has been redeemed when it hasn't, the clerk should call the retailers' hot line for instructions, she said. The customer should not have to leave without the winnings.

"If someone has something like this happen, they should call us," she said. "We can get it resolved. There are some minor problems. But we're getting those resolved quickly."

Should someone be mistakenly sent away without being paid, that individual should call the players hot line at 1-877-786-7529, she said.

While business is brisk, callers should still be able to get through or will get a return call if they leave their name and number, she said.

Gerlock said a phone bank is staffed around the clock now.

"We're certainly busy, but we're trying to be responsive to every request we get," she said.

A call to the players hot line at 8:20 p.m. Friday yielded an automated message that said "that mailbox is full and cannot accept any new messages."

It then said: "You are being transferred to the operator."

After a brief wait, the next message was: "That extension is not valid."

Shortly after 12:30 p.m. yesterday, someone answered the 1-877-786-7529 number immediately after the first ring, saying "Tennessee Lottery Games."

The state's lottery raked in about \$10.8 million in its first 22 hours Tuesday. About one-third will go to education. The rest goes to vendors, advertising and others with contracts related to the games. ■

