



Safety First for Secondhand Sales

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MADISON – Yard sale signs are popping up throughout Wisconsin and there are deals to be had for the bargain-inclined. Whether your chosen “storefront” is in a driveway or in an online classified ad, there are risks to consider for both buyers and sellers in the resale marketplace.

Yard sales

“To prevent risk of injury, buyers should check for recalls on the items they intend to purchase at garage sales,” said Lara Sutherland, Administrator for the Division of Trade and Consumer Protection. “This is an especially important practice when looking for children’s items like cribs, gates, toys, and play yards.”

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recalls toys and other products for children each year if they have the potential of causing injury or death. Products for any age group can be recalled for a variety of reasons including fire hazards, strangulation hazards, missing warning labels, electrocution hazards, lead levels in paint, loose magnets, choking hazards, fall risks, and more.

The CPSC recently launched a mobile app that shoppers can use to search for product recalls (the app must be downloaded from the CPSC website: <https://www.cpsc.gov/data>). Having this app or the CPSC website open on your smartphone while you shop is a good practice.

Two other areas where shoppers tend to seek secondhand deals are tools and electronics. If you are shopping for battery-powered items, check the battery compartment for signs of corrosion. For electrical items, keep an eye out for frayed wires or questionable repair jobs on cords. If you are able to test these items on site, run them through their paces before you make a purchase.

Online sales

For buyers and sellers that prefer to use online classified ad sites or apps (Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, Letgo, etc.) for their transactions, scams are a significant risk. The first step to ensuring a safe transaction is to deal locally and meet the other party face-to-face in a public location. Reach out to your local police department to see if you can handle the transaction in the station lobby or if the department has a designated “swap spot” or “safe exchange zone” (such as a parking spot with video coverage) on the station grounds. An inability or refusal to meet in person to complete a transaction, especially at a police station, is a primary sign of a scam.

Additional scam red flags to watch for when using an online classified ad service include:

- (For sellers) Vague initial inquiries, e.g. asking about "the item."
- (For buyers) Significant discounts on high-ticket items (vehicles, etc.) with a story about the owner being overseas, in the military, or involved in an accident.
- Emails or texts from someone who is not local to your area (especially if they claim to be overseas).

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- Poor grammar/spelling.
- Requests for payment by wire transfer, cashier's check, money order, or prepaid debit or gift cards.
- If a buyer offers to pay you extra for an item and asks that you return the difference, you are likely facing a check scam. The check the buyer sends you is fake, and you will be responsible for the full amount withdrawn when the bank discovers the fraud. Do not cash the check.
- Beware of offers that involve shipping.

For additional information, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wi.gov, call the Consumer Protection Hotline at 800-422-7128 or send an e-mail to datcph hotline@wi.gov.

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