



Protect Yourself from Holiday Scams

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MADISON, Wis. – During the winter holidays, many Wisconsinites exchange gifts to bring joy and show their appreciation for others. Unfortunately, scammers also know that gift buying and giving is a holiday tradition and will try to take advantage of consumers’ good intentions. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is asking consumers to remain on alert for common holiday scams.

Package Delivery Scams

Have you received a text message about a failed or delayed package delivery? Knowing that many consumers make their holiday purchases online, scammers send these texts and emails hoping you will click on the link they send. But opening that link will direct you to a convincing copy of a real delivery company’s website that asks for your personal information or an additional “shipping fee.”

- DATCP’s tips: To check the status of a delivery, go directly to the delivery company’s or retailer’s website. Don’t click the links in a text or email.

Online Marketplace Scams

An online marketplace like Craigslist, eBay, or Facebook Marketplace allows users to buy and sell products directly with each other. Whether you are selling or buying, be wary if a user asks you to pay upfront, requests you move your conversation to text messages or another platform, or says they need you to send them a security code – which could give them access to your private accounts.

- DATCP’s tips: Keep conversations on the platform they started on. Never send anyone a security code sent to you, for any reason.

Fake Website Scams

Scammers create fake versions of common retailers’ websites, then try to trick consumers into making “purchases” on the fraudulent platform. They may use ads, social media posts, or emails and text messages to draw users in. By making a “purchase” on a fake website, you are sending money to a scammer *and* giving them your payment information, which could lead to further fraudulent charges or even identity theft.

- DATCP’s tips: Never open a link you are sent, even for a familiar site. Instead type the address directly into your browser. Before entering any information, closely examine a website’s address for unusual phrasing or incorrect spelling, and confirm that “HTTPS” (not “HTTP”) is at the beginning of the address before entering personal information like your password or credit card number. The “S” stands for “secure!”

Safe Online Shopping Tips

No matter how you make your purchases this holiday season, there are precautions any consumer can take to keep their money and identity safe. Avoid making purchases over a public Wi-Fi network since you never know who could be monitoring that data. Use a credit card since this payment method has built-in fraud protection. Ask your credit card company if they offer additional protections like “virtual card numbers.”

For more information and consumer protection resources or to file a complaint, visit DATCP’s Consumer Protection webpage at ConsumerProtection.wi.gov or contact the Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 422-7128 or DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov.

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