



## Don't Get Scammed This Holiday Season

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MADISON, Wis. – The winter holidays are a time of charity, gratitude, and gift-giving. Everyone is looking for the best deals and money-saving tricks. Scammers try to take advantage of consumers' holiday plans through rip-offs and fraudulent schemes. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) encourages all consumers to learn how to identify and avoid these common holiday scams:

- **Delivery notification/shipping scams.** Fake shipping companies may send consumers messages alerting them to a delivery and threatening to delay unless the consumers 'verify' private information. Sometimes there is an attachment to download, usually containing a virus.
  - Do not open these messages or provide any personal information. Contact the company directly using a verified customer service phone number or email address for a shipping status update.
- **Giveaway scams.** Consumers may receive messages claiming they have won a prize such as a gift card to a major retailer. The catch: consumers are asked to pay a small 'processing fee,' to complete a survey, or to provide some personal data before they can claim it.
  - Prizes do not require fees. Never engage with someone offering gift cards or other goods for "free," but with strings attached.
- **Online marketplace scams.** Social media platforms and other online marketplaces offer the option to buy and sell directly with other users. Scammers may pose as buyers or as sellers, and have a variety of strategies they use to fool consumers.
  - Be wary of buyers overpaying with checks – this is a sure sign of fraud; do not refund them. Do not pay for items unless the seller can be confirmed as legitimate. Do not give personal information or move the conversation to an off-site channel.
- **Pet scams.** Pets are a popular holiday gift, but consumers should use caution when buying one online. Scammers will advertise pets, and when contacted claim the pets were already sold but that they know a faraway second seller with more options.
  - Ask for the name and location of the pet's veterinarian. Contact the vet using publicly available information to confirm the pet really exists. Never pay up-front for pets sold online.
- **Ticket scams.** Tickets to popular events can be expensive and in short supply. While many unofficial sellers and third-party websites are legitimate, watch for unreasonable prices and fake ticket sales.
  - Purchase tickets from official vendors that have established policies for cancellations and refunds.

For additional information and consumer protection resources or to file a complaint, visit DATCP's Consumer Protection webpage at [ConsumerProtection.wi.gov](http://ConsumerProtection.wi.gov). If you have questions or believe you are a victim of a scam, report it by contacting DATCP's Consumer Protection Hotline by phone at (800) 422-7128 or email at [DATCPHotline@wi.gov](mailto:DATCPHotline@wi.gov).

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