



Safety First for Resale Shoppers and Sellers

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MADISON – Tulips and yard sales ...both pop up throughout Wisconsin at this time of year. Spring cleaning offers a promise of great deals for shoppers and “cash for trash” for sellers. But whether a transaction takes place in a driveway or an online classified ad, both shoppers and sellers need to be aware of the risks they may face in this resale marketplace.

Yard sales

“A risk for yard sale shoppers is that they will walk away with an unsafe product,” said Michelle Reinen, Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection. “A buyer should take steps to ensure that the items they purchase have not been recalled and are safe to use in their homes.”

While all second-hand items need to be evaluated for safety, children’s items such as cribs, play yards, gates, and toys require extra caution and recall research. The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recalls scores of 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.

Use the CPSC website to search for recalls on items you are considering (<https://www.cpsc.gov>). Having the website open on your smartphone while you shop is a good practice. The major app stores also contain recall apps that allow you to search on the spot using your mobile device.

Two other areas where shoppers tend to seek second-hand 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.

When using an online classified ad service, watch for scam red flags:

- An inability or refusal to meet face-to-face to complete the transaction
- Emails or texts from someone who is not local to your area (especially if they claim to be overseas)
- Poor grammar/spelling
- Requests for payment by wire, cashier’s check or money order

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- 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. Don't cash the check
- Beware of offers that involve shipping
- (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

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 datcphotline@wisconsin.gov.

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