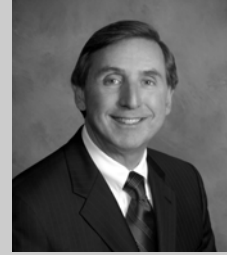


SCAM ALERT!

A Consumer Update from
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HOLIDAY SCAMS

DECEMBER 2010

The Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office would like to warn you about some of the top scams of the holiday season.

Here are our Top 5:

1. **Phony gift cards:** be cautious about buying gift cards through classifieds or auctions. Instead, buy gift cards directly from a merchant or authorized retailer.
2. **Check electronics purchases:** criminals buy an electronics item, open it and then fill the box with an equivalent weight of rocks and put the package back together. Then they return the box to the store as an unopened item. Most retailers won't take responsibility. Be sure you have the merchandise you paid for before you leave the store.
3. **Watch your purchases closely** as they are rung up. If you're not watching carefully, you may overpay. The scanning machines can be scammers.
4. **Online auction scams:** "buyer beware" when dealing with these nameless, faceless, salespeople that could disappear at any time. Pay for items using PayPal so you can cancel the transaction if you don't receive the merchandise or if you don't receive what you ordered.
5. **Watch your wallet:** when shopping in crowded stores it could be very easy to walk away from your wallet or purse in a shopping cart. A thief can easily steal your wallet or purse so be careful to keep your wallet in a safe place while shopping.

The above ALERT is part of the Montgomery County Prosecuting Attorney's initiative to help our citizens become aware of ways they can avoid becoming a victim, or stopping criminal activity that may be occurring. Upon request, the office can provide presentations on crime prevention actions and activities to halt crime and increase the quality of life in our community.

If you would like additional information on the above ALERT, or would like additional information regarding our programs to assist consumers in general and/or seniors in particular, please contact Jennifer Heapy, Supervising Attorney, Adult Protection Unit, or Sarah Schenck, Supervising Attorney, Fraud and Economic Crimes Unit at 937-225-5757.

We would like to send *SCAM ALERT* updates to you electronically. Please send your e-mail address to: newsletter@mcpo.com to be added to our distribution list.