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SCAM ALERT!



A Consumer Update from Mat Heck, Jr., Prosecuting Attorney



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Montgomery County Prosecutor

BEWARE OF HOLIDAY SHOPPING SCAMS

Historically, the day after Thanksgiving marked the big start to holiday shopping. Now, many people have already started their shopping "online." In fact, more than 60% of consumers now do their shopping online. And, scammers have developed ways to take advantage of shoppers looking for bargains on the internet.

For example, "spoofing" sites and fake social media posts are now being used to entice consumers into spending money for products they will never receive. These fake sites take the credit card numbers and other personal data that the buyer provides to make a purchase, and then the fraudsters use the credit card numbers and other personal

data to commit identity theft. Consumers should be on the look-out for links or attachments to emails that claim to be coupon offers or "order confirmation" emails asking the consumer to verify an order that they did not make.

HOW TO REDUCE RISK:

Pay attention to the following warning signs:

- Huge discounts on hot gift items, especially when touted on social media posts or unfamiliar websites.
- Spelling errors or shoddy grammar on a shopping website or in an email.
- Sites that do not list a phone number or street address for the business and offer only an email address or a fill-in contact form.
- A site that does not have a privacy policy.
- An unsolicited email asking the consumer to click on a link or download an app to access a deal or arrange a delivery.

IF YOU THINK YOU ARE BEING SCAMMED OVER THE INTERNET:

- Report suspected criminal Internet activity to the IC3 at www.ic3.gov; article at <https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-releases-the-internet-crime-complaint-center-2018-internet-crime-report>
- You can also file a complaint with FTC.gov under the Internet Services, Online Shopping or Computers section or the Unwanted Telemarketing/SPAM section; article at <https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov/>
- Unfortunately, this type of fraud is difficult to investigate and or follow up on the local level. However, our office is happy to answer any questions you may have, call 937-225-4747 and ask for a Fraud Investigator.

The above ALERT is part of the Montgomery County Prosecuting Attorney's initiative to help citizens become aware of ways they can avoid becoming a victim, or ways they can help stop 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 Kimberly Melnick, Supervising Attorney, Adult Protection Unit, or Anthony Schoen, Supervising Attorney, Fraud and Economic Crimes Unit at 937-225-5757.

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