

DATCP: Warns of gift card scammers during holiday season

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MADISON, Wis. - Shoppers searching for the perfect holiday gift may choose a gift card as a thoughtful and considerate present. However, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) advises shoppers to think twice before using prepaid credit cards or gift cards to make payments of any type.

Scammers convince their victims to submit payments via gift cards in many ways. They may set up fake sales listings or other too good to be true offers, contact you demanding payments for an outstanding debt, or threaten disconnection of your utilities. Fraudsters might even send a check in the mail asking you to put the money in your account, then ask you to send money back via prepaid credit card due to "overpayment." By the time your bank recognizes the check is fraudulent, your money is long gone.

"Imposters prefer payment by gift card because these cards are like cash," said Lara Sutherlin, Division of Trade and Consumer Protection Administrator, "Once you turn over the card number, you cannot cancel, refund, trace, or reverse the transaction. This may leave the victim out hundreds or even thousands of dollars."

Gift cards are for gift giving. Anytime someone demands payment by gift card or prepaid credit card, assume it is a scam and halt communication immediately. If you are shopping for a gift card to give as a present, follow good consumer protection practices by:

- Reading the fine print at the time of purchase.
- Inspecting the packaging to ensure any protective stickers are still in place and that the card numbers and PINs are not exposed.
- Giving activation receipts to the gift recipients.

For additional information and consumer protection resources, visit DATCP's Consumer

Protection Bureau at datcp.wi.gov. If you have been the victim of a scam, report it by [filing a complaint online](#), emailing datcph hotline@wisconsin.gov, or calling DATCP's Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-422-7128.