

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: DATCP offers consumers tips to avoid scams this holiday season

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MADISON, Wis. - This holiday season, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is reminding shoppers to make sure their gift purchases are not going to scammers. The 2021 holiday season poses unique challenges for shoppers. The ongoing global pandemic has affected the supply chain and created episodic shortages of various goods on store shelves. Shoppers looking for that special item may find themselves vulnerable to unscrupulous scammers.

“Every year we receive complaints from people who thought they were buying holiday presents but never received them,” said Lara Sutherlin, Administrator of DATCP’s Division of Trade and Consumer Protection. “Consumers can protect themselves from scammers and secure their holiday purchases by recognizing some of the warning signs of a scam.”

Shopping Online

Watch out for too-good-to-be-true offers and fake e-commerce sites while doing your holiday shopping. Online holiday scammers often feature in-demand products like electronics, the hottest toys, and fashion items. Crooks use fake websites, online marketplaces sites, social media messages, and text or email blasts to trick you into downloading malware or gather your personal or banking info.

Gift Cards

Gift cards have been used as the bait in many social media, text message, and email scams.

Watch for phony surveys that promise a gift card in exchange for your personal information. Scammers sell your personal information without sending a gift card. Do not click on any links in unsolicited messages or internet ads that promise a free gift card.

Always buy gift cards directly from the retailer or authorized merchant. If you are considering buying an unused card secondhand, only buy from someone you know/trust. Avoid online auction sites selling discounted or bulk gift cards as these cards may be tampered with or expired.

Delivery Confirmations

Watch out for emails or texts that warn you about a problem with a delivery, request account information for security purposes, or ask you to open an attached “shipment label” to claim a package from a local office. Scammers often use the names, logos, and color schemes of major shipping companies and retailers to add legitimacy to their messages, and may spoof the company’s web address (URL) in the sender’s email address.

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.