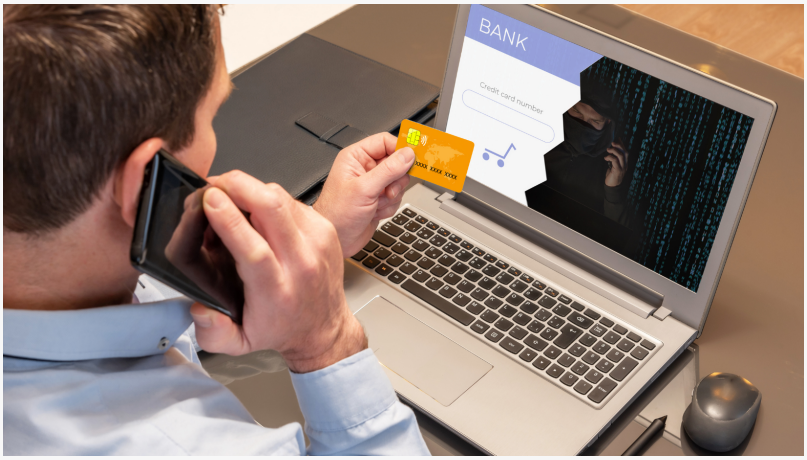
As Holiday Spending Surpasses Pre-pandemic Levels, Here are Keys to Avoiding Fraud

Fraud artists are working overtime to steal this holiday season, here are suggestions on how to be a savvy shopper for the best deals but also avoid scams



SPOKANE, WASHINGTON, UNITED STATES, November 14, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This holiday shopping season here are keys to protect shopping both in person and online and not falling victim to a scam. When donating to charity or shopping for gifts, be smarter than the scammers.

Shoppers plan to spend an average of $1,652 this season, surpassing pre-pandemic figures for the first time.[1] A majority of businesses have experienced a fraud incident during the holidays as business payments increase.[2]

> Expect an increase in scams this holiday shopping season, with fraud artists taking advantage by leveraging AI."
>
> *Heather Stratford, Drip7 Founder and CEO*

About half of consumers who said they've been targeted by an online holiday shopping or phishing scheme ended up getting scammed, according to a new survey by Norton. The survey reported an average loss of $1500 by respondents who fell victim to scammers.[3] Others think the number is closer to 75% of shoppers are scammed at least once last year.[4]

"Expect an increase in scams this holiday shopping season, with fraud artists taking advantage by leveraging AI," warns Heather Stratford, CEO and Founder of Drip7.

Things to watch out for:

Identity theft can occur both online and in person. Be careful about giving out personal information. At an ATM or sales terminal, look to see that a skimmer has not been added to the

official device. Watch for shoulder surfing when using an ATM, when someone stands too close, so they can read someone's access info. Do not discard any paperwork with identifying information in the store.

When shopping online, create a unique username and password for each account or store.

Fraudulent websites, emails, or messages claiming to offer unbelievable deals will abound this season with bad actors leveraging AI. Always verify the legitimacy of the website and never click on suspicious links or provide personal information to unknown sources. Ensure that the website is secure (look for "https" in the URL).

Phony ads that scam are growing. When an ad on a social media platform offers a way to shop directly, don't click the ad to shop. Instead, initiate a connection to the correct store website.

Avoid making purchases on unsecured public Wi-Fi networks as they can be vulnerable to hackers. Use a secure, private network for online shopping to protect data.

With sales specials creating a crush of crowds seeking to get the best deals, defend against pickpockets and watch your belongings.

Be alert to the delivery of items. Emails notifying of delivery issues, that invite "click here" to update delivery dates or provide a corrected delivery address, could potentially be a scam. If a notice arrives, don't click. Instead, return to the original purchase website known to be safe to address issues, or call customer service. Be suspicious of any email reporting a delivery delay.

Package thefts in November and December are an issue. If not at home when a purchase arrives, is there a security camera or a safe package delivery location? If it is a gift for someone else, can it be delivered to their office?

Giving to charities tends to increase at the end of the year. Select legitimate charities that can be verified. If someone calls and asks for a donation, there is no way to verify their authenticity. Find a way to donate that is self initiated. Callers asking for gift cards or cryptocurrency should be considered suspicious.
If purchasing gift cards, get them from a reputable store that won't add unnecessary fees or sell an "empty" gift card. Be extremely careful when shopping with vendors out of the country.

Popular products that are in short supply are used as bait on selling platforms. The seller offers a hard-to-acquire item at a price too good to be true - because it is. The scammers might ask for a payment upfront using a payment app like Zelle or Venmo.

Online surveys, and gift exchanges within large organizations could potentially be seeking personal information to hack. This is called social engineering. Scammers are counting on people's good nature during the holidays to let their guard down. Never give out personal

identifying information. Innocent questions such as the name of a first dog, could be sought to complete a security question on an account.

If scammed, alert the relevant financial institution for that credit card to immediately freeze the account.

Check statements regularly for fraud. Some credit cards have a zero fraud liability, credit monitoring services can be purchased, but need to have them before being scammed.

The elderly are often specifically targeted for scams. Help educate and protect elderly family members. According to the FBI, elder fraud costs victims $3 billion in losses each year and is on the rise.[5]

Report scams. Reporting will not result in getting money back, but it can help others with alerts or the apprehension of the bad actors. An alert goes out to thousands of law enforcement organizations to investigate and end the scam.

The BBB, Better Business Bureau, has a scam tracker if suspicious, or one can report a scam. https://www.bbb.org/scamtracker.

The FTC, Federal Trade Commission also monitors scams at https://reportfraud.ftc.gov/#/

Before each purchase, pause a moment and consider if there is a possibility of being scammed and is there a safer way to buy?

[1] https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/retail-distribution/holiday-retail-sales-consumer-survey.html
[2] https://www.securitymagazine.com/articles/100061-the-holiday-season-leads-to-a-rise-in-business-payment-fraud#:~:text=The%20report%20found%20that%20three,holidays%20as%20business%20payments%20increase.
[3] https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/seasons-cheatings:-holiday-scams-and-ripoffs-to-avoid-in-2023#:~:text=About%20half%20of%20consumers%20who,average%20of%20%241%2C500%2C%20it%20said.
[4] https://www.aura.com/learn/holiday-scams
[5] https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fbi-warns-elder-fraud-crime-rates-rising-scammers-steal-billions-each-year/

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