



CONNECTICUT CONSUMER PROTECTION MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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SCAM ALERT

What it is: Gift Card Scams

How it works:

During the holiday season, scammers pose as businesses, charities, government agencies, or law enforcement and claim you must make an urgent payment. They pressure you to buy gift cards and hand over the PIN numbers by warning of extra fees, non-existent emergencies, or supposed legal consequences.

How to protect yourself:

No legitimate organization, government agency, or law enforcement office will ever ask for payment by gift card. Never share gift card numbers or PINs to anyone you do not know. Always verify requests using official contact information and report suspicious demands immediately.

Charities: How to Donate with Confidence

December is the most popular month for charity donations, but unfortunately, scammers look to prey on generous donors. Learn how to avoid charity scams, and ensure your money goes into the right hands.

Research Before Donating

Legitimate charities will allow potential donors to take their time and research the cause. Fraudulent charities often use high-pressure tactics to ask for donations.

Instead, use tools like [BBB Wise Giving Alliance](#), [Charity Navigator](#), or [CharityWatch](#) to see how organizations use their donations. These tools offer a rating based on the financial transparency of the organization.

Ask Questions

If you are approached by a charity solicitor in person, ask about the process. Legitimate charities will have specific answers to the following questions:

- How was the organization created? What is your mission?
- What percentage of my donation goes to the cause?
- How did you get involved with this charity?
- What are some of your upcoming events?
- Are there additional ways to take part in this organization?

If you discover the charity online, contact the organization's customer service number to ask any questions you have.

Signs of Charity Scams

1. Solicits donations through text message, email, or phone call without providing any details about the organization.
2. Accepts donations through wire transfer, gift card, or cash. Only donate through a traceable form of payment (check or credit card).
3. If the website does not have ".org" at the end of their domain. Be wary of lookalike websites as scammers will create similar pages as well-known organizations.



SPEAKING REQUESTS

Want DCP to speak to your organization, or table at your event? Contact Erin Walsh at erin.e.walsh@ct.gov to submit a request.

Contact Us

Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection

450 Columbus Boulevard,
Suite 901
Hartford, CT 06103-1840
Main Line: (860) 713-6100
(8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)

Consumer Complaint Center

(860) 713-6300
Toll Free: (800) 842-2649
8:30am-4:30pm
Email: DCP.complaints@ct.gov

VISIT US ONLINE
CT.GOV/DCP

Follow Us on Social Media
@CTDCP
on Instagram, Facebook, X and
LinkedIn

Consider Alternative Methods

If you are wary of donating money to an online platform, consider a tangible donation. Most organizations will provide a list of items that are needed for their cause.

Common in-kind donations are non-perishable food items, books, blankets, toys, clothes, or personal care products.

Keep an eye out for donation or volunteer opportunities provided by your local food bank, school, library, or other trusted groups.

To verify a registered charity in Connecticut, visit: eLicense.ct.gov. Detailed instructions on how to verify credentials can be found at CT.Gov/DCP.

Shopping for toys this year? Here's what to know

- **To test if a toy is safe, place small parts into a paper towel roll.**
 - If it can pass through the tube, it's a choking hazard.
- **Avoid social media ads of popular toys for suspiciously low prices.**
 - If the deal is too good to be true, it probably is. Don't be lured by low prices.
- **Major retailers are more likely to have toys manufactured with current safety standards.**
 - Shopping with major retailers, local stores you trust, and in person so you can inspect the product yourself can help you avoid purchasing an unsafe toy.
- **Read labels closely.**
 - If a toy package does not have a label or is missing information about what age the toy is appropriate for, it might be counterfeit or not safe for children.
- **Be mindful of the ages of all children in the home.**
 - A toy meant for an older child may be in the shared play space and at reach for a younger child.

Have a tip we missed? A topic you want more information about? Send us an email at DCP.Communications@ct.gov.