



# CONNECTICUT CONSUMER PROTECTION MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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## SCAM ALERT

**What it is:** Charity Scams

**How it works:** During the holiday season, scammers increasingly pose as legitimate charities soliciting donations. These scammers disguise their identity to pressure you to quickly donate to their fraudulent organization via cash, gift card, money wire, or by any other suspicious method.

**How to protect yourself:**

Always check and verify the authenticity of a charity solicitation by conducting independent research about the organization. Ask soliciting callers about their registration, document every donation, and never pay by cash, gift card, or money wire.

## Online shopping is convenient. But watch out for scammers this holiday season.

In December, e-commerce sales skyrocket as consumers purchase their holiday gifts.

But last year, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reported more than 368,000 fraud complaints related to online shopping, the second most common fraud complaint in the United States. One in four Americans reported losing money to a scam, with an average loss of \$500.

As cybercrimes become sophisticated and harder to spot, it is more important than ever to be a smart and protected shopper this holiday season.

Some safety tips while you shop online:

- **Review return policies:** Read the site's return or exchange policy as major retailers like Amazon and Target are tightening their policies due to increased return fraud.
- **Don't fall for good deals:** Pop-up ads may appear for popular products at suspiciously good prices. If a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is. Don't click on suspicious ads.
- **Watch out for fraudulent products:** Unknown sites will try to sell knock-off products or counterfeit toys, which are often mislabeled and contain small parts and/or toxins. Only shop with trusted retailers.
- **Check the URL:** Look to see if the website starts with "https." The S means the site is secure. Check the



### **SPEAKING REQUESTS**

*Want DCP to speak to your organization, or table at your event? Contact Catherine Blinder at [Catherine.Blinder@ct.gov](mailto:Catherine.Blinder@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](mailto:DCP.complaints@ct.gov)

### **VISIT US ONLINE**

**[CT.GOV/DCP](https://www.ct.gov/DCP)**

grammar throughout the website. Use [Google's Safe Browsing Tool](#) to ensure that the website is safe.

- **Read the reviews:**
- **Use a credit card:** Credit cards offer more protection than debit cards. Under federal law, you can dispute unauthorized charges to your credit card. Avoid apps like PayPal, Venmo, and Zelle for online payments. Only use this method with people you know and trust.
- **Shop local:** Shopping locally can prevent you from becoming the victim of an online scam.

### **What to do if you're a victim of an online scam:**

1. Report the scam as soon as possible to DCP, the Federal Trade Commission, and your local police department.
2. Contact your bank or credit card issuer to dispute charges. They may be able to cancel the charge.
3. Change your passwords for all your online accounts.

### **Watch out for Smishing**

**Smishing attempts** are when scammers send text messages pretending to be a delivery service to trick recipients into entering personal information.

As you wait for your packages to be delivered, you may receive a text message that appears to be from USPS or FedEx stating, "Your package has been delayed; confirm your ZIP code through the link."

If you receive a message like this, do not click the link, use the "Report Junk" feature, and block the number. If you sent or are expecting a package and are still unsure, call the delivery service's customer service number.

Remember, you will only get text updates about your package if you opt-in to them.

***Have a tip we missed? A topic you want more information about? Send us an email at [DCP.Communications@ct.gov](mailto:DCP.Communications@ct.gov).***