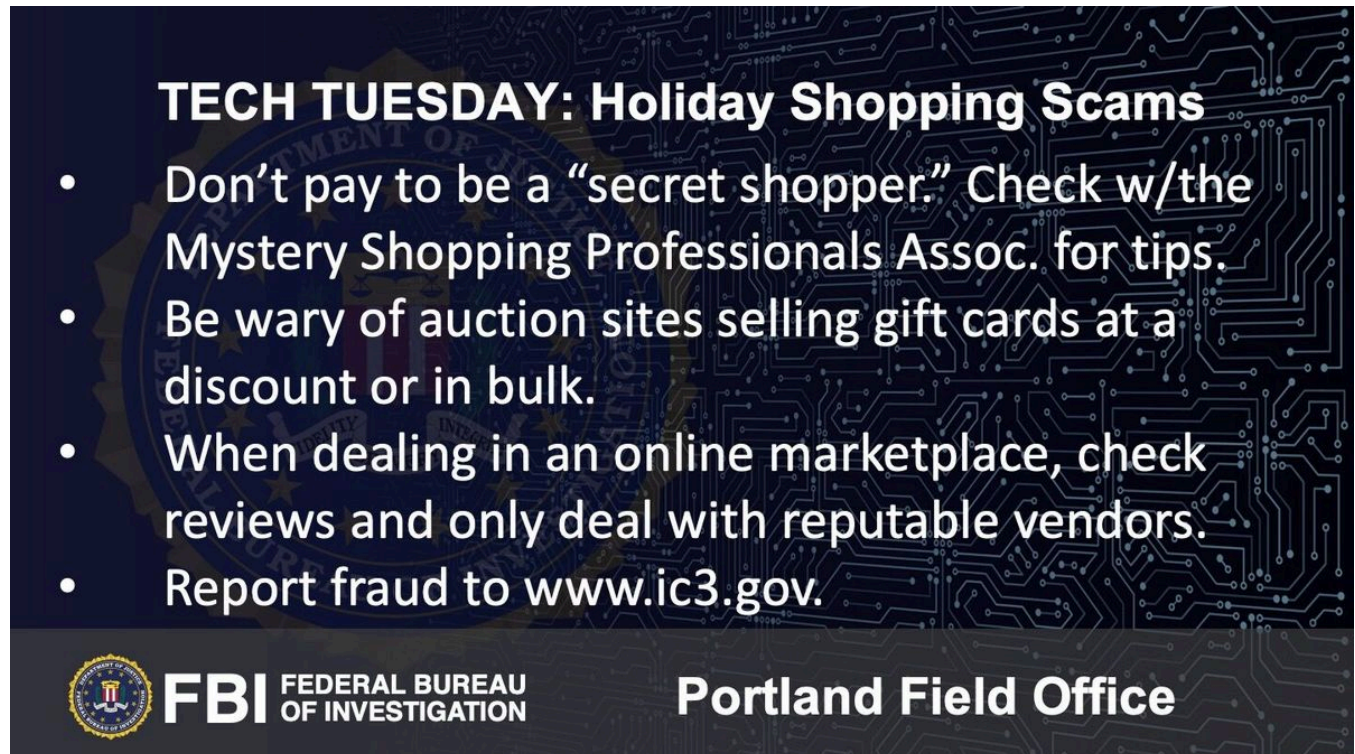


Tech Tuesday: Building a Digital Defense Against Holiday Shopping Scams

December 7, 2021



TECH TUESDAY: Holiday Shopping Scams

- Don't pay to be a "secret shopper." Check w/the Mystery Shopping Professionals Assoc. for tips.
- Be wary of auction sites selling gift cards at a discount or in bulk.
- When dealing in an online marketplace, check reviews and only deal with reputable vendors.
- Report fraud to www.ic3.gov.

 **FBI** FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Portland Field Office

Welcome to the Oregon FBI's Tech Tuesday segment. Today: Building a digital defense by helping Santa out this shopping season.

First – let's start with the dream job for all wanna-be-Santa's. Earning a little extra cash as a secret shopper. There are legitimate companies that hire legitimate secret shoppers to go around, buy things, and report back on their experience.

Here are the basics: **you** should search out the mystery shopper opportunity. Do not respond to an unsolicited email, text message, or social media post offering to set you up with such a gig. Also, the company should be paying you – you should never pay for help finding such a job, nor should there be an "application fee." You can find out more about how to do this safely through industry's **Mystery Shopping Professionals Association**.

Next up – a popular gift option that comes in every shape and size: the gift card. They are easy, and they help lighten the load in Santa's sleigh.

Of course, those on the naughty list know that, too, and they are ready to cash that card out before you even get it.

Let's say you are either trying to sell a gift card you don't want or buy one at a discount. You exchange numbers and payment. If you are buying the gift card, you may find out that the fraudster drained it as the transaction processed, leaving you with a zero balance. On the flip side, if he is buying a card from you – he gets the number and PIN and then stops payment on the cash coming your way. Here are some other tips to stay safe:

If buying from a secondary gift card market website, check reviews and only buy from or sell to reputable dealers.

When purchasing gift cards online, be leery of auction sites selling gift cards at a discount or in bulk.

When buying in-store, don't pick cards right off the rack. Look for ones that are sealed in packaging or stored securely behind the counter. Also check the scratch-off area on the back to look for any evidence of tampering.

If possible, only buy cards online directly from the store or restaurant.

Check the gift card balance before and after purchasing the card to verify it has the correct balance.

And, a final jingle jangle to make sure you are talking with St. Nick in the safest way possible. Many organizations help Santa communicate with wee ones as a fundraiser or goodwill operation. But, of course, there are those with coal in their hearts who are just in it for the cash. Parents can always work directly with Santa to make sure the little tykes get a letter from the jolly guy. Our friends at the U.S. Postal Service have all of the info on how to do that on their website [here](#).

If you are the victim of an online scam, you should report the incident to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov or call your FBI local office.