

CDFW warns of continued fraudulent license sales operations

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If you are in the market for a California fishing or hunting license (or any related products, such as hunting tags), it's important to ensure that you are making your purchase from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or an approved vendor.

The CDFW reports that several unauthorized online websites are continuing to improperly charge customers extra fees for online fishing and hunting license purchases, and may be collecting sensitive personal information as part of their unauthorized transactions.

California hunting and fishing licenses may properly be purchased in only one of four ways:

Online through CDFW's Automated License Data System (ALDS),

Over the telephone through CDFW's authorized Telephone Sales agent at (800) 565-1458,

Through a CDFW license sales office, or

Through an independent license sales agent authorized by CDFW (such as a local sporting goods store, large discount store, or a bait and tackle shop),

Because CDFW's license sales offices and some independent license sales agent offices have been temporarily closed to help slow the spread of COVID-19, there has been a surge in online sales over the summer months. Unscrupulous website operators and scammers are taking advantage of increased virtual traffic, and the public should take extra precautions to ensure they do not fall victim to a scam.

Since June 2019, six websites offering unauthorized license sales have been taken down at CDFW's behest, and an additional two websites are in the process of being disabled.

The ALDS, which is CDFW's exclusive means of online license sales, was launched in 2011. ALDS can be accessed via CDFW's website or by clicking the link that is frequently provided in official communications from the department. When making an online purchase, please check the URL of the site you are visiting to ensure you are on the official CDFW website (wildlife.ca.gov) or the ALDS website (www.ca.wildlifelicense.com/internetsales). These are the only CDFW-affiliated links for hunting and fishing license sales.

Unofficial websites may attempt to represent CDFW and/or contain information about hunting and fishing licenses, and Internet search engines may not always list the official CDFW website as the top result.

Please be cautious when providing personal information to any website. While authorized purchases made through independent license sales agents and ALDS are subject to an additional 5 percent handling fee, the fraudulent sales websites offer products for sale with "shipping and handling fees" that are much higher than 5 percent of the base purchase price. To date, it appears that the fraudulent activity has been limited to charging customers unauthorized fees. Licenses that have been mailed to customers after unauthorized transactions may be valid; however, CDFW cannot guarantee that this is or will be true in all cases.

If you believe you may have been defrauded by an unauthorized website or would like to check the validity of a previous purchase, please provide us with information about your experience at ReportFraud@wildlife.ca.gov.