

Nov 27, 2023

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OFFICE OF THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL
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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

VIDEO: Attorney General Moody Encourages Floridians to Be Cautious Shopping Online This Cyber Monday



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—On Cyber Monday, Attorney General Ashley Moody is encouraging Floridians to be cautious while shopping online. Economists predict retail sales during this holiday season will exceed [\\$957 billion](#), with [consumers expected to spend more than \\$11 billion](#) on Cyber Monday alone. Scammers may use this excitement to prey on unsuspecting shoppers. Attorney General Moody's Cyber Fraud Enforcement Unit is hard at work combating online scammers and other cybercrime. Today in Tampa, Attorney General Moody, Florida Department of Law Enforcement leaders and members of the CFEU urged Floridians to protect sensitive information while holiday shopping.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Cyber Monday is one of the year's busiest online shopping days. All the action this time of year creates a target rich environment for cybercriminals trying to craft schemes to trick consumers and steal their money. Our Cyber Fraud Enforcement Unit fights crime, but it is important that Floridians be aware of potential scams and shop with caution."

FDLE Special Agent in Charge Mark Brutnell said, “Holiday season is upon us, and so is the season of scam artists and fraudsters. Floridians are at a higher risk for online scams and fraud attacks during the holiday season. It is important to be vigilant when shopping online, know the merchants you are buying from, and refrain from clicking on suspicious ads, especially on social media.”

One common online tactic that can target shoppers is impersonation scams. In these scams, fraudsters will contact a target posing as representatives from a legitimate company to extort payment. For instance, a target may receive an email or a phone call from a person pretending to be from Amazon or another online retailer, claiming the target's account is suspended and the only way to regain access to the account is to send the scammer money or gift cards.

Another scheme to watch out for is smishing scams. In these scams, a target may receive a text that appears to be from UPS or the United States Postal Service saying that a package cannot be delivered. The scammers hope that the victim will click on the link in the text to “claim” the package, providing personal and financial information to the fraudsters.

To avoid falling victim to these schemes:

- Do not be rushed by a solicitor—if someone calls and demands immediate action, take a second to investigate the caller's claims;
- Do not search online for banks' or merchants' phone numbers. Rather, download the company's official app after thoroughly reviewing it on the app store and find the customer service number on the app—fraudsters set up fake webpages with phone numbers that go directly to scammers to entrap people searching online for a company's real contact number;
- Never buy from an unknown company;
- Do not provide personal or financial information to a solicitor over email, social media or the phone;
- Know that no legitimate business or banking institution will call to demand payment to fix an account problem; and
- Never be ashamed to notify law enforcement right away in the event of falling for a scam.

Attorney General Moody's CFEU is working to investigate similar schemes. The unit currently has more than 75 active investigations involving cryptocurrency, stolen identities, money laundering and more. The unit has recovered hundreds of thousands of dollars for victims of cybercrimes.

Attorney General Moody suggests the following steps for Floridians who unfortunately fall victim to identity theft to protect information:

- **Secure Devices:** Change passwords for all online accounts, especially for sensitive information.
- **Preserve Evidence:** Take screenshots or gather any relevant information that can serve as evidence.
- **Report the Cybercrime:** Contact local law enforcement, the [Florida Department of Law Enforcement Computer Crime Center](#) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's [Internet](#)

[Crime Complaint Center](#). Floridians can also submit an online complaint to Attorney General Moody's Consumer Protection Division at [MyFloridaLegal.com](https://www.myfloridalegal.com).

- **Notify Financial Institutions:** If the cybercrime involves unauthorized access to bank accounts or credit cards, contact a bank or credit card company immediately. Inform the organization of the incident and follow instructions to protect accounts and dispute any fraudulent charges.
- **Update Security Measures:** Ensure a computer, smartphone or other devices have up-to-date antivirus software, firewalls and security patches installed. Regularly update operating systems and software to address vulnerabilities.

Tips for safe online shopping, as well as information about avoiding charity fraud and a list of recalled items, can be found in the 2023 Holiday Consumer Protection Guide.

To access the guide in English, click [here](#).

To access the guide in Spanish, click [here](#).

Attorney General Moody's *Scams at a Glance: 'Tis the Season* brochure is also full of tips consumers should consider to protect financial and personal information during the holiday season. To view *Scams at a Glance: 'Tis the Season*, click [here](#).

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