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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

CA: Beware of Phishing Websites When Holiday Shopping



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today issued a warning to Floridians who are holiday shopping online to be wary of phishing websites designed to look like a company's legitimate website. According to a Threat Report by Webroot, traffic to fake websites spikes during the holiday season—increasing by more than 20% on some of the most popular shopping days. A cybersecurity report, released in August, also shows that over the past six years, the impact of phishing attacks quadrupled, now costing companies $14.8 million per year. With many signs pointing to a continued increase in online sales during the holiday shopping season, Attorney General Moody encourages Floridians to stay on the lookout for websites that are not what they seem to be.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Last year, online shopping saw record-breaking numbers, and there is a good chance that this year will be similar. With millions of people searching online for holiday gifts, it is no wonder that scammers are creating fake websites to steal their money. All it takes is a simple letter change, extra space or a wrong click for a consumer to visit a fraudulent website. Be extra cautious this holiday season of the websites you visit and make sure to only give financial information to trusted sites."

Phishlabs, self-described - cybersecurity professionals with the goal of making everyone safer online, created a chart to show the simple adjustments scammers can make to create a weblink that looks similar to the original.

TECHNIQUES TO CREATE LOOK-ALIKE DOMAIN NAMES			
TLD swap	phishlabs.tech	**Omission**	phshlabs.com
Subdomains	phish.labs.com	**Transposition**	phsihlabs.com
Typosquatting	phishlavs.com	**Insertion**	phishxlabs.com
Hyphenation	phish-labs.com	**Homoglyph**	phishlaƄs.com
Repetition	phishllabs.com	**Vowel-swap**	phishlebs.com
Replacement	ph1shlabs.com	**Addition**	phishlabss.com

Attorney General Moody also warns retailers to search online for websites with similar URLs to their own. Websites that resemble a retailer's website may result in a consumer accidentally giving financial information to scammers. In a 2019 Domain Fraud Report conducted by online security company Proofpoint, 76% of Proofpoint's customers found look-alike domains posing as its brand. Any look-alike websites found by retailers should be reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Internet Crime Complaint Center here.

To protect Floridians from falling victim to fake-website scams, Attorney General Moody offers the following tips:

- Pay close attention to the website address to ensure the correct page is visited;
- Refrain from clicking on website links from unknown sources;
- Research an online store before buying anything from it—check for authenticity;
- Stick to trusted sites, many of which are listed on the Better Business Bureau's online shopping directory; and
- Companies should consider registering domains with slight variants to the companies' designated domain, in an effort to prevent scammers from creating fake websites using the slight domain variations.

Attorney General Moody recently released the 2021 Holiday Consumer Protection Guide, containing further tips for safe online shopping and how to avoid charity-related scams. The guide also contains a list of recalled items to be on the lookout for while holiday shopping this year. To access the guide, click here.

Attorney General Moody's Scams at a Glance brochures also includes *Scams at a Glance: 'Tis the Season*, a brochure 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.

To report an online shopping scam, contact the Florida Attorney General's Office at 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or file a complaint online at MyFloridaLegal.com.