

Police share warning about the ?12 Scams of Christmas?]

The Dufferin Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) has seen an increase in fraud reports recently. Investigators from the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre have provided information warning about the 12 scams of the holidays.

For most people, this is the season for giving, but for scammers, it's the season for taking advantage. Don't fall victim to the following scams.

- 1) Phishing Emails and Texts - You may receive messages claiming to be from a recognizable source (e.g. financial institution, telecommunications company, service provider, shipping company) asking you to submit or confirm your information. They may even include a malicious link.
- 2) Emergency - Is a supposed loved one reaching out to you because they need money now and you're the only one they trust to keep it a secret? Resist the urge to act immediately and verify the person's identity by asking those questions a stranger wouldn't know.
- 3) Counterfeit Merchandise - Look out for huge and flashy discount ads that direct you to websites that look like the legitimate manufacturers. If you do receive any inferior products, they could pose significant health risks.
- 4) Selling Goods & Services Online - Be suspicious of payment offers that are more than the asking price and confirm that you have received a legitimate payment before you send the product.
- 5) Crypto Investments - Fraudsters are using social media and fraudulent websites. Before investing, ask for information on the investment. Research the team behind the offering and analyze the feasibility of the project. Verify if the company is registered by using the National Registration Tool (www.aretheyregistered.ca)
- 6) Romance Scams - An attractive fake identity lures you into their web of lies spun with loving messages and sweet promises. The fraudsters play on your emotions to maximize their payday over time.
- 7) Online Shopping - Fraudsters pose as genuine sellers and post fake ads for items that do not exist. The listing price for almost any item (e.g. event ticket, rental, vehicle, and puppy) is usually too good to be true. Research before you buy. Whenever possible, exchange goods in person or use your credit card for payment.
- 8) Secret Santa - You may have noticed multiple gift exchange posts on your social media feeds. This may seem like a fun activity where you only have to send one gift and receive multiple in return. Unfortunately, this exchange collects some of your personal information and also hides a pyramid scheme where only those on top profit. Pyramid schemes are illegal in Canada.
- 9) Prize Notifications - You may receive a letter or a call with the good news; you've won millions and a fancy car too. First, you just need to confirm your personal information and then cover a few fees before your winnings can be delivered. Remember: If you didn't enter, you can't win. You can't enter another country's lottery without purchasing a ticket from within that country. In Canada, if there are fees associated to a prize, they are removed from the total winnings; you would never be required to pay fees in advance.
- 10) Gift Cards - Gift cards are a popular and convenient way to give a gift. They should also be considered like cash; once they are exchanged, it is unlikely that you are getting your money back. Gift cards are not meant for payments and no legitimate business or organization will request these; especially under pressure.
- 11) Charity Scams - During the season of giving, make sure your donations are going to the right places. Charity/donation scams involve any false, deceptive, misleading or fraudulent solicitation for a donation to a charity, association, federation or religious cause. Refuse high-pressure requests for donations, ask for written information about the charity and do your own research. Remember to always ask the solicitor for the charitable tax number and confirm their registration with the Canada Revenue Agency or by phone at 1-800-267-2384.

12) Identity Theft and Identity Fraud - In all the hustle and bustle of the season.

DO: keep your wallet on your person and cover your PIN.

DON'T: share passwords or provide your personal information on impulse.

Fraudsters love a good shopping spree; especially when they're using someone else's name and money. Contact your financial institutions and the credit bureaus, Equifax Canada and TransUnion Canada, as soon as you notice:

- a. Suspicious activity on your financial statement/s.
- b. Unauthorized activity on your credit report.
- c. Letters approving or declining credit applications you did not authorize.
- d. Re-routed mail.
- e. Bills from service providers you do not use.
- f. Your information was compromised as part of a database breach.

Anyone who suspects they have been the victim of cybercrime or fraud should report it to Dufferin OPP at 1-888-310-1122 and to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre's online reporting system or by phone at 1-888-495-8501. If not a victim, report it to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre anyways.