

BUSINESSSAFE

BusinessSafe is designed to aid businesses in protecting the safety and well-being of Florida's residents and visitors from threats. BusinessSafe provides private sector partners with open source information, analysis and resources to help protect their businesses and communities.

Florida Fusion Center 19-257

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BusinessSafe Threat Topic: Holiday Scams

Although scams are prevalent year-round, consumers are heavily targeted during the year-end holidays. Consumers are expected to spend roughly 3.8 percent to 4.2 percent more this holiday season than last year, totaling an estimated \$730 billion dollars this year. The tactics and techniques listed below are a summary of potential scams that may be seen over the holiday season.

- **Holiday Online Gift Card Scams:** This scam uses illegitimate sites or hyperlinks falsely advertising free gift cards to obtain personal information on users. These sites may request information such as addresses and bank account information to obtain the “free” gift card. Once personal information is entered, scammers can then open accounts, use personal information for credit, or even drain bank accounts.
[Gift Cards – There's No Such Thing as a Free Lunch](#)
- **Package Delivery Scams:** The goal of this scam is to obtain personal information or gain access to an individual's electronic devices. The scammer often pretends to be associated with a trusted mail delivery service claiming to have an undelivered package which may incur a holding fee. Individuals may be asked to provide personal or financial information including bank account or credit card numbers.
[Scam Alert: Don't Be Fooled by a Fake Package Delivery Scam](#)
- **Puppy Scams:** It is estimated in some reports that as many as 80% of sponsored advertising links in internet searches for pets may be fraudulent. This type of scam is especially prevalent during the holidays as many families are looking to purchase or adopt pets. The majority of pet scams begin with the buyer browsing the internet for “free/cheap pets for sale”. These websites will usually insist on communicating through email or text message and request payment up-front for the pet through wire transfer or money card. Once payment is received, the fictitious breeder or individual disappears.
[Scam Alert: Beware of Puppy Scams This Holiday Season](#)



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- **Temporary Holiday Jobs Scams:** During the holiday season, many people search for seasonal employment for additional income. Scammers deceive individuals who are searching for jobs by making promises regarding employment opportunities, then request payment for training, material, certification, or a “placement fee” to hold the job.
[How to Avoid Holiday Job Scams](#)
- **Travel Scams:** Individuals looking to book holiday travel reservations should remain alert to potential travel scams. In some instances, scammers use websites that look like legitimate airline or hotel reservation pages to gather the sensitive personal and financial information of victims. Scammers may also inform you via text, phone call, or email, that you have won a free vacation and ask you to pay a fee before you can claim your prize.
[5 Tips to Protect Yourself From Online Travel Booking Scams](#)

Ways to Protect Yourself from Holiday Scams

- **Protect your personal information:** Exercise caution when providing social security numbers, date of birth, bank account numbers, etc.
- **Be wary of deals that are too good to be true:** Do research on any person or company before you do business with them. Double-check email addresses, links, and contact information in email correspondences.
- **Avoid clicking links in unsolicited emails:** Links can be used to download malware. Verify that sources are legitimate before clicking emails and scan email attachments with antivirus programs before opening them.
- **Stay up-to-date on the latest scam tactics:** The [Better Business Bureau](#) provides information on the latest fraud techniques with advice on avoiding scams. [Secure Florida](#) provides best practices for cybersecurity including how to avoid cyber scams.

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