

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.

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BusinessSafe Threat Topic: Counterfeit Goods

The production and distribution of counterfeit goods is a constant and evolving issue for businesses around the world. Counterfeit goods are goods manufactured using inferior or low-quality materials and are often illegally claimed to be sold under an established company brand without that company's approval. While designer accessories and electronics may be the products most often counterfeited, counterfeit products can include any good produced and sold in-person or online. Some of these counterfeit goods can be potentially life threatening as they may not meet required safety and quality standards. For example, counterfeit car seats may use lower quality materials in the car seat's construction, especially in crucial components such as the chest clips and provide inferior anchoring attachments that do not meet safety standards. Failure of any of these components to protect the child in the event of an incident can result in harm to the child. Additionally, counterfeit products harm legitimate businesses through lost revenues, unauthorized trademark or copyright usage, and intellectual property theft. This article includes an overview of common methods used by counterfeiters to sell or use fraudulent goods along with warning signs and mitigation tactics for businesses and individuals. While these lists are not all encompassing, they offer information for businesses to better recognize and prevent the use or purchase of these goods.

Common methods of attack

- Counterfeiters may use large online retail or third-party online sites that may or may not monitor the products sold on their website. Some resell sites may have no way of tracking the products' validity and may therefore unknowingly sell counterfeit merchandise.
- Counterfeit products may be sold on social media marketplaces, at flea markets and by street vendors who may use illegal tactics to avoid detection from law enforcement.
- Online sellers may use legitimate logos and product information when selling items online, yet once purchased, the consumer receives a counterfeit product.

Potential signs and indicators

- If the price seems too good to be true, it probably is. Counterfeit goods are often sold at lower prices than their legitimate counterparts.
- The quality of the product is inferior or looks slightly different than the official product sold by the legitimate company.
- The seller or website appears to be dubious or untrusted and may contain multiple spelling and grammatical errors.



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Mitigation strategies

- Mitigation strategies for buyers:
 - When possible, purchase goods directly from the company or an authorized reseller.
 - Research customer reviews and seller profiles to ensure the legitimacy of the product.
 - When purchasing medicines online, only use licensed pharmacies. Consumers can locate a state-licensed online pharmacy to ensure legitimacy.
- Mitigation strategies for sellers:
 - Companies can educate customers on how to identify differences between counterfeit and genuine products.
 - Companies can also monitor known counterfeit retail sites to ensure their brand is not being illegally used.
 - E-commerce reseller companies should ensure the products sold on their websites are from legitimate sellers.

Ways victims can report

- The International Trade Administration's [Stopfakes](#) reporting website provides links to multiple federal agencies for consumers and companies to report online vendors selling counterfeit or pirated goods.

Resources

- The International Trade Administration's [Stopfakes](#) website offers multiple resources including training, toolkits, and guides to help business and individuals protect their intellectual property rights and spot and report counterfeit products.
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection provides multiple resources on [counterfeit products](#).
- The Food and Drug Administration offers advice and resources on their [website](#) to help consumers protect themselves from counterfeit medicines and illegal online pharmacies.



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