CYBER ALERT - Have a Fraud-Free Christmas: Be Alert to Online Shopping Scams

As Black Friday, Cyber Monday and the festive shopping season approach, the public are being urged to stay vigilant against online shopping fraud.

According to Report Fraud, more than 14,000 reports of online shopping fraud were received during last year's festive shopping period. Between 1 November 2025 and 31 January 2026, victims lost a total of **£18.3 million**, with an average loss of **£1,278 per victim**. Criminals know that many people are searching for festive bargains and gifts online. They take advantage of this by creating fake websites, fraudulent social media adverts and phishing messages designed to trick shoppers into paying for goods that never arrive.

Common Online Shopping Scams Include

- Fake online stores offering heavily discounted goods.
- Fraudulent sellers on social media and online marketplaces.
- Payments for items that never arrive.
- Counterfeit products sold as genuine goods.
- Receiving items that are significantly different from those advertised.

How to Protect Yourself

Thoroughly research retailers before making a purchase, especially if you have not used them before.

Check independent reviews from trusted sources.

Check the website is genuine. Carefully examine the web address, look for contact details and returns information, and be alert to spelling mistakes, poor-quality content or unusually low prices. Remember that a padlock icon only shows that your connection to the website is encrypted. It does **not** guarantee that the website itself is legitimate.

Be cautious of deals that seem unusually cheap or too good to be true.

Pay by credit card where possible, as this may provide additional consumer protection.

Use strong, unique passwords for your shopping, banking and payment accounts.

Avoid following links in unsolicited emails, texts or social media messages. Instead, visit retailers directly through their official website.

Pay particular attention to adverts on social media. A professional-looking advert does not guarantee that a retailer or seller is genuine. Always conduct your own checks before making a purchase.

If You Think You May Have Been a Victim of Cyber Crime or Fraud

Report it to **Report Fraud** as soon as possible:

UK's Home for Reporting Cyber Crime & Fraud - Report Fraud

0300 123 2040

Remember

If a deal looks too good to be true, it probably is. Taking a few extra minutes to check a retailer or seller before you buy could help protect your money and prevent criminals from spoiling your Christmas.

Reply Share Rate



Message Sent By
Mick Harrison
(Devon & Cornwall Police, Cyber Protect Officer, Devon & Cornwall)

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