



CONSUMER ALERT

Office of Consumer Affairs

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Is Cupid Aiming for Your Wallet?



Valentine's Day is just around the corner and con-artists are looking for their perfect match. "Cyber-scammers are relying on increased internet use to find new ways to trick consumers," warns Cynthia Sich, Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs. Beware of the following scams:

Social Media Sites. Use caution with links that look as if they were sent by a friend. When you click on that link, you may unknowingly share your information with scammers who might post on your page or send their information to all of your contacts. It is recommended that you use the strongest privacy settings.

Flower Orders. If you receive an email or telephone call explaining that the flowers you ordered for your sweetie will not be delivered unless you give your credit card number, it is a scam. Con-artists send hundreds of emails, and are hopeful that a few messages will reach consumers who really have sent flowers. If you think the message is real, first call the florist or go directly to the florist's website.

Email cards. Be careful opening a Valentine's Day eCard. It could actually be a phishing scheme to obtain your personal information or to infect your computer with spyware. Do not open non-personal emails, e.g. "from your secret admirer." Only open email from people you know and trust.

Online Dating. Proceed with caution after meeting the perfect mate. Scam artists often create fake profiles to lure vulnerable people into revealing personal information, or to ask for money because they are sick or have a relative who needs emergency medical attention. Be wary of free dating sites as they may offer less monitoring and protection than those that charge a fee.

Ordering Gifts Over the Internet. Be careful of pop ups offering discounts. Hidden in that pop-up is fine print that tells you that you have agreed to join a fee-based membership program. You will find small recurring charges on your credit card or bank account. If you experience unauthorized charges, please contact the Office of Consumer Affairs at 330.643.2879 to file a complaint.

Show your loved one how sweet and smart you are by buying gifts or flowers from local merchants and delivering them personally to your sweetie. Whatever your romantic status, don't fall for the common scams that are sure to pop up this Valentine's Day.