

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS POINTER

Keep Your Information Secure This Holiday Season

Many people will turn to online shopping this holiday season. Online shopping is appealing because it alleviates issues of traffic and large crowds in stores. If you choose to shop online for gifts this year, be sure you keep your information secure. The Internet enables criminals to use multiple ways to steal your personal information. Be aware of the different online scams. There are several steps you can take to prevent your information from being compromised this shopping season. Below are the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team's guidelines for online holiday shoppers.



Be Aware of Emails Requesting Additional Information

Emails requesting that you confirm purchase information are used frequently by attackers. Lawful businesses will not ask for this kind of information. Do not provide any personal or sensitive information via email. Do not click on links from unsolicited emails.

Do Business With Reputable Vendors

Always be sure to verify the authenticity of websites before shopping. Attackers may trick you by staging websites that appear legitimate. The U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team provides a link for you to learn more about checking website authenticity: [Understanding Web Site Certificates](#)

Make Sure You Shop on Encrypted Websites

Majority of sites use secure sockets layer (SSL) to encrypt information. There is a very simple way to know if a website has an SSL. The URL should begin with "https:" instead of "http:" and a padlock icon. If the padlock is closed, the information is encrypted. Attackers will often times try to add a fake padlock icon. Look to make sure the padlock icon is in the correct spot for your browser.

Always Use a Credit Card When Making Online Purchases

There are laws in place that protect credit card holders from fraudulent activity. However, many people do not have the same kind of protection for debit cards. It is also important to use a credit card when using a 3rd party for payment such as PayPal, Google Wallet, or Apple Pay.

For more information about online shopping and safety, view U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security's [Stop. Think. Connect. Toolkit.](#)

