United States Secret Service Cybercrime Investigations

Online Sales and Auction Fraud

Non-Delivery | Non-Payment | Phishing

The United States Secret Service and other law enforcement agencies have detected an increase in fraud associated with online sales and auctions.

Online Sales and Auction Fraud | *A type of fraud scheme cyber criminals use to obtain payment, merchandise, or credit card information from unsuspecting individuals and organizations.*

Non-Delivery | *A cyber actor elicits an advance payment for merchandise or services, but does not deliver them to customer.*

Non-Payment | *A cyber actor receives merchandise or services, but does not remit a payment to the seller.*

Phishing | *A cyber actor receives credit card information with the intention of using it in other fraudulent activity. This typically accompanies a non-delivery scheme.*

COMMON INDICATORS OF ONLINE SALES AND AUCTION FRAUD

- The price seems too good to be true.
- Seller is providing reasoning why an item is substantially cheaper than market value.
- Seller is using a post office box instead of a physical address.
- Seller is using free email service.
- Seller is avoiding regular communication, or listing a phone number that does not work.
- Seller is asking you for your social security number or other personally identifiable information (PII).
- Seller is claiming to be a U.S. military member stationed overseas.
- Seller is encouraging you to complete the transaction “offline” to avoid fees and to purchase the item via a wire transfer.
- Seller is insisting on using pre-paid gift cards for payment and asking you to photograph the gift card to send to the seller as proof of payment.

Here are some tips to protect yourself from online sales and auction fraud:

- ✓ ***Use reputable websites to purchase merchandise and services.***
- ✓ ***Check for TLS/SSL security, by looking for a green lock icon next to the URL in the browser, to protect your credit card information.***
- ✓ ***Review seller’s history and customer feedback.***
- ✓ ***Search seller’s name and contact information using an online search engine.***
- ✓ ***Check if the seller has multiple email accounts and phone numbers.***
- ✓ ***Compare information found online and information posted by seller for any discrepancies.***
- ✓ ***Check with the Better Business Bureau.***
- ✓ ***If using an escrow service, verify that it is legitimate.***