

Hacked for the Holidays 2022

Stay ahead of the hackers this holiday season! This month's newsletter will highlight a few helpful tips to keep you and your family safe from scams.

Charity scams

Charity scams are in full effect around the holidays. Scammers are looking to take advantage of people who want to donate to charity. These scam artists lie about their affiliation, create phishing emails and share posts on social media to attract gift-givers. Focus on finding charities that will use your donations appropriately and avoid being scammed.

Quick tips

- * Check the name of the charity and its ratings with the FTC or another similar agency
- * Find out who's behind crowdfunding or social media donation links
- * Pay with safe payment methods. Do not use gift cards, wire transfers or cryptocurrency
- * Use the official website to make your donation

Travel security

Research has estimated that nearly half of people worldwide will travel during the holiday season. With an increase in travelers comes an increase of travel security concerns. Our personally identifiable information is out of its usual secure place and easily accessible to others if we aren't careful. Before you travel, take time to ensure that your information is safe and secure.

Quick tips

- * Leave unnecessary electronics at home
- * Keep your devices and personally identifiable information (such as passports and IDs) with you at all times
- * Turn off auto-connect to Wi-Fi settings and avoid public Wi-Fi
If you are planning to share
- * information about your trip on social media, wait until you return home

Gift card scams

Gift cards are not always used as a simple gift; sometimes they are used as a scam. These attacks have been happening in the home and in the corporate setting, both damaging. These scams are popular because they are easy for individuals to access; there are fewer protections; and once the card has been accessed by the scammer, the damage is done.

How do these scams work? In the business setting, an individual would receive an email from someone impersonating a manager or a higher-level employee, asking the target to purchase multiple gift cards and to send them the activation codes. Outside of the workplace, scammers pretend to be from the government, tech support or a utility company. They contact individuals and ask for payment via gift card.



Quick tips

- * If you receive an email at work asking you to purchase a gift card, immediately report it as phishing. Do not reply or comply!
- * If you receive a phone call requesting that you purchase gift cards, hang up immediately and report it. In the US, you can report to ReportFraud.ftc.gov
- * Avoid buying gift cards from online auction sites! The cards may be fake or stolen

Looking for a charity?

Charity Navigator provides free access to data, tools and resources to guide philanthropic decision-making. Using a tool like Charity Navigator can help you ensure that you are donating to a legitimate charity, which keeps you, your data and money safe from scammers this holiday season.

<https://www.charitynavigator.org/discover-charities/>



Exciting new gadgets? Keep it on the down-low

Getting a new gadget is always exciting, but be careful how much you share about it. Hackers know about Internet of Things (IoT) devices and how to access them. Be sure to follow best practices when firing up these new toys. Change the default passwords, check all security settings and keep it up-to-date to safely enjoy your devices.

1 <https://consumer.ftc.gov/consumer-alerts/2022/11/charity-scams-veterans-tug-heart-strings-and-grab-wallets> 2 <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/cybersecurity-tips-international-travelers> 3 <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/gift-card-scams>

