



Trowbridge – Rural and Villages

Hello and welcome to this month's Community policing report.

With the countdown to Christmas fast approaching, we will see millions of people going online to buy presents for their friends and family. What many do not realise, is the hidden threat that we now face from criminals online. Internet shoppers are being targeted with scams, which on the surface promise to save them time and money but in reality only deliver festive heartache and misery.

To make life as difficult as possible for the cyber fraudsters, we have put together the top tips for a safe and happy festive season online:

**1. SHOP, SHOP, SHOP -**

- If something seems too much of a bargain, it's probably poor quality or doesn't even exist.
- Always check payment pages are secure, and log out when you've finished shopping online.
- If possible use online retailers / brands that you are aware of and trust. For major brands always go to the official website to find a list of authorised sellers.

**2. AUCTION BARGAIN ... OR NOT? –**

- When making a purchase from an auction website, use insured payment methods like PayPal and never do a bank transfer to people you don't know.
- Do all you can to check the seller or buyers are authentic. And look out for fake goods: they're illegal and cost livelihoods and can be dangerous.

**3. JUST THE TICKET –**

- Only look at tickets from a reputable website that is secure (showing padlock) and before buying, do an internet search for reviews.
- Avoid entering your bank or credit card details on public or shared computers.
- Never pay for the tickets by way of money transfer.

**4. COME FLY AWAY... -**

- Whether you're planning a break at Christmas or next year, make sure the holiday or flight is genuine by researching it thoroughly, and check travel agents for an ABTA/ATOL number.
- Always pay with a credit card; if they don't accept, don't buy from them.
- Research the internet and consider the reviews of the company / person you wish to use before booking your trip.

## **5. CHRISTMAS E-CARDS**

- If you receive an anonymous e-card, better to play it safe and delete the e-mail. Many are genuine, however cyber-criminals have been known to create their own version which may contain a virus that will embed itself into your computer.
- Use a reputable anti-virus product on your electronic advice.
- If you believe that your electronic device has been infected, switch it off and disconnect from the internet to prevent further information being stolen.

## **6. WHO'S ASKING? –**

Scam emails, calls, texts and posts are getting cleverer and you're bound to get some over Christmas. Think twice before you get talked into anything, however busy you are.

## **7. YOUR PASSWORD IS YOURS. KEEP IT THAT WAY! –**

Passwords that are easy to guess, that you use for more than one account or that you share with others, are a no-no!

## **8. SECURELY CONNECTED? –**

Secure Wi-Fi is vital for your privacy. At home, check your router security settings. Out and about, never use free Wi-Fi hotspots when what you're doing is private.

## **9. GREAT OFFER, OR SUBSCRIPTION TRAP? –**

Don't sign up for 'free' or 'low-cost' trial goods without thoroughly reading the small print. You could be signing up for massive direct debits.

## **10. MOBILE PAYMENTS**

- Do not save passwords or personal / financial information onto your mobile device unless it is absolutely necessary. Make sure the phone is password protected.
- If stolen, most mobile devices have the software to wipe all data from their memory remotely – learn how this works.
- Do not leave your Bluetooth switched on.

## **11. DATING / ROMANCE FRAUD**

Many singletons will be making a New Year resolution to find their ideal partner, and signing up to an online dating website. This can be a great way to find true love, but you also need to be on the lookout for fraudster trying to wind your affection.

- Guard your privacy when chatting online and be selective with the information you provide about yourself.
- Never send money or give credit card or online account details to anyone you do not know and trust.
- Trust your instincts, if something feels wrong take steps to protect yourself.
- Recommend dating locations are in public and a friend is told where you will be?