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Informational Alert – December 2010

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Holiday S.O.S. (Shopping Online Safety)

More and more people are using online shopping for the holidays . Although it is a convenience to shop from the comfort of your home, there are some extra precautions that you must take to keep your personal information safe.

1. Be sure that all anti-virus, anti-malware and anti-spyware protectors are updated and in use on your computer.
2. DO NOT open emails from addresses or recipients that you do not recognize. Phishing, or bait emails requesting your personal information may be received that say something like, “An unauthorized transaction on your account has caused your account to be closed. To ensure that your account has not been compromised, please click the link below to confirm your identity”. DO NOT click on the link. By doing so, you could possibly infect your computer with a virus or Trojan horse. You may forward these type of phishing emails that are asking for your personal information to spam@uce.gov.
3. If you receive an email asking for money to be wired to help a family member, friend or soldier; it is a scam. Wire transfers are a preferred method used by criminals because it is difficult to trace.
4. Be sure that the website that you are using is indeed the actual website and not a hijacked website made to look like it. Call the company direct to ask them what their website address is.
5. Only shop on secure websites that display the locked padlock image on the browser status bar, or look for the <https://> in the browser window when proceeding to checkout.
6. Charitable donations - check out a charity before you make a donation by going to www.give.org or www.charitynavigator.org. NEVER donate to someone going door to door or calling you on the phone. They should never ask for any of your personal information (i.e. birthdate, social security number, banking information). A legitimate charity will kindly send you a letter or receipt for tax purposes.

7. If you discover that your financial accounts may have been compromised, contact your banking institution immediately and also make a police report.

8. You are entitled to one free credit report a year from EACH agency. You may order your free credit reports by going to www.annualcreditreport.com or by calling:

Equifax 1-800-685-1111 Experian 1-888-397-3742 Transunion 1-800-916-8800

It is always best to be proactive than have to be reactive after your identity has been compromised.

~IDENTIFY A SCAM BEFORE A SCAM IDENTIFIES YOU! ~