



## Protect Yourself This Holiday Season

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*A commentary by Secretary Romanski of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)*

MADISON, Wis. – The holiday season is here. While many take this opportunity to be thankful, share with others, support local small businesses, or just be festive, others are looking at the holidays as a way to try to separate hard working people from their money by pitching “too good to be true” schemes. The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is offering some holiday season tips so you can enjoy more of the holiday cheer and, hopefully, none of the seasonal scams.

Be on the lookout and protect yourself from scams. Most cases of identity theft or scams begin with cybersecurity breaches which can be prevented through updating software and downloading malware blocks. Research your options and protect yourself this holiday season, as some scammers utilize the holiday season, including Cyber Monday and Giving Tuesday, as their next payday. There are steps you can take to safely support these causes or shop online.

Additionally, use caution when responding to email or phone solicitations for information as these are often veiled attempts to obtain important and private information, such as your credit card or social security number. Scam artists are even callously trying to capitalize on the global pandemic with COVID-related consumer scams. Being intentional with how you share your personal and private information may help protect your bank account and identity.

Businesses can also research how to best protect their operations from ransomware attacks. Ransomware is a type of malicious software that can restrict access to a computer, including a business’ hard drives, until a ransom is paid. In order to protect your business, enable strong spam filters for email, download anti-virus and anti-malware programs, and utilize firewalls.

At DATCP, we serve as a resource to address consumer complaints and inquiries from Wisconsinites who report scams and fraudulent activity. While DATCP does not have authority over cybercrimes, we work with the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on education and awareness and can refer cases to them as necessary.

If you have experienced identity theft or another scam, report it to us at [datcp.wi.gov](http://datcp.wi.gov). Our team will continue to educate consumers about how to protect and prevent identity theft and other scams as well handle consumer inquiries and complaints that are submitted to us. Please remember to do your part to protect yourself from possible fraud. Have a safe and healthy holiday season.

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