

Personal Security Series

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Internet Auction Fraud

Living in a world in which we are consistently connected, sharing our information (both knowingly and unknowingly) and instant gratification for those answers, or help, we seek, has made our vulnerability volatile. This series will deal with heightening our awareness on fraudulent behaviors. The information was provided directly from the Federal Bureau of Investigation website, <https://www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/common-fraud-schemes>. I have copied much of the information directly from this website. It does not provide attributes to any specific author(s).

The FBI indicates that seniors are especially vulnerable to these schemes. Seniors tend to have more money, making them better targets. Most seniors are trusting and polite. They are less likely to report a fraud because they are embarrassed they were scammed, do not realize they were scammed until well after or just don't know how to go about reporting a scam. Seniors also are more susceptible to promises that can make their retirement years more "Golden" and are easy victims to those false promises.

I must say it is depressing to see and hear about all the scams that exist out there. Seniors are not the only prey out there. These con artists come up with ingenious ways to get your guard down and cause you to react without thinking.

Internet auctions has become popular for e-commerce and is gaining more and more popularity with new entrepreneurs taking to auction sites to get their products noticed. The most familiar sites are eBay and Amazon, however there a multitude of auction sites out there. In using these auction site, it is important to remain diligent in protecting yourself from internet auction fraud.

Internet auction fraud involves schemes attributable to the misrepresentation of a product advertised for sale through an Internet auction site or non-delivery of products purchased through an Internet auction site. In advance of making a purchase on an Internet auction site, be sure to review the site's fraud prevention tips and additional security alerts.

Tips for Avoiding Internet Auction Fraud:

- Understand as much as possible about how the auction works, what your obligations are as a buyer, and what the seller's obligations are before you bid.
- Find out what actions the website/company takes if a problem occurs and consider insuring the transaction and shipment.
- Learn as much as possible about the seller, especially if the only information you have is an e-mail address. If it is a business, check the Better Business Bureau where the seller/business is located.
- Examine the feedback on the seller.
- Determine what method of payment the seller is asking from the buyer and where he/she is asking to send payment.
- If possible, purchase items online using your credit card, because you can often dispute the charges if something goes wrong.
- Be cautious when dealing with sellers outside the United States. If a problem occurs with the auction transaction, it could be much more difficult to rectify.

- Ask the seller about when delivery can be expected and whether the merchandise is covered by a warranty or can be exchanged if there is a problem.
- Make sure there are no unexpected costs, including whether shipping and handling is included in the auction price.
- There should be no reason to give out your social security number or driver's license number to the seller.

The real message here is to stay on our guard. I felt as I prepared for this series that it is only a matter of time before I become susceptible to any of these. There are many innovative crooks out there and some may exist in our own families. I don't mean these newsletters to be scary, but it's current life in the USA. Unfortunately, with the internet and little tracing, it's hard to get and convict the scoundrels. We hear too often of those that have been affected by fraudulent dealings and hope that writing and distributing information on it may help you become more aware of these scams so that if you are ever in this type of situation, a red flag will come up and cause to KEEP YOUR GUARD UP!

Our comprehensive program at Edu4Retirement, Inc. is designed to teach people about retirement and the various issues that confront each person as they make their solo journey into retirement. To obtain copies of other series, visit our website at <http://www.edu4retirement.com/p/newsletters>.

We are forever learning as we go through this process, since family dynamics, personal desires and amounts involved can be infinitely different. However, the patterns we see in personal behavior and decisions of our clients make our experience very helpful to most.

Michael Callahan and Steve Tillona are available for any questions that may arise as you make this journey. You may contact us at:

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