



24 DECEMBER 2020

Shopping scams set to skyrocket over summer break

Netsafe calls for vigilance as New Zealand hunts for post-Christmas bargains as scammers refuse to go on holiday.

It is meant to be a time to celebrate with friends and whanau and enjoy a well-deserved Kiwi summer.

But, according to Martin Cocker, Netsafe CEO, if you think scammers will be basking in the sun and getting into the festive spirit, you would be mistaken.

“Each year after the Christmas rush, Netsafe sees a huge spike in people who have fallen victim to online scams,” Cocker says.

“With more of us away on holiday and using devices, there tends to be an alarming increase in the number of people clicking on things that, on the face of it, appear to be a great deal, but in reality, could be a sinister intent by clever scammers to obtain personal details or defraud you.”

In 2019, scams were the highest reported online harm category received by Netsafe. Scams related to product and services fraud accounted for more than \$3.3 million reported as lost and the average loss was \$1,318.89.

There was a 16.8 percent increase in online scams in January compared to December. The number fell in February (-14.97 per cent) as people returned to work.

Cocker says people often don't realise they have been unwittingly caught up in a scam until February when the penny drops that the goods they had ordered are not coming.

Holiday season scams often involve heavily discounted goods. Cocker says this is why online shopping scams in January are often prevalent. “People expect big sales at this time of year, and so when advertisements for cheap goods pop up, we are more likely to believe the offer is legitimate.”

Another aspect of online shopping Netsafe is urging people to be careful with over the holiday season is auction sites which feature an influx of unwanted Christmas gifts.

“If you are buying things on Trade Me or Marketplace, Netsafe's advice is to check the background of the vendor and confirm they have a selling history that can be trusted, including whether they have completed successful trades in the past.”

Netsafe remains open every day except Christmas Day and have a team available for free

and non-judgemental advice about scams or any other form of online harm.

Netsafe's online shopping tips

- 1. Look for the padlock:** Look for a padlock symbol in the browser window when you browse, login, register and check out.
- 2. Check your refund options before you purchase:** Large companies will often have information about their refund policy on their website. Credit cards often have additional protections – talk with your bank about the chargeback options on your card.
- 3. How to pay:** Buy online using a credit card or a well-respected payment service such as PayPal. Buying with a credit card gives you better protection than a debit card. If something goes wrong, you'll be able to try to get a chargeback through your bank.
- 4. Use a disposable credit card:** You can also shop online using a disposable credit card, like a Prezzy card.
- 5. Saving payment details:** Some retailers will ask if you'd like to save your payment details for next time. If the website isn't using a third-party payment system, think carefully about how they might use that information, and how well they'd be able to protect it if someone tried to steal it.
- 6. Check your credit card statements:** Always check your credit card statements to make sure no fraudulent charges have been made. If you spot something, contact your bank immediately.

For more tips including advice on what to do if something has gone wrong, go to netsafe.org.nz/online-shopping

-Ends-

Media contact

Angela Boundy – Senior Marketing Communications Advisor
Mobile: 027 228 3930 | angelab@netsafe.org.nz

About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation with an unrelenting focus on online safety. We keep people of all ages safe online by providing free support, advice and education. Visit netsafe.org.nz for useful resources or call 0508 NETSAFE (0508 638 723) seven days a week for help with an online incident.