



‘Don’t click on that’: OPP issues online fraud warning ahead of holidays



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Giving holiday gifts. *Getty Images*

Every year Canadians are bilked out of millions of dollars, from [online shopping](#) to phone and romance [scams](#). There always appears to be someone looking to get into your wallet.

“As we’ve evolved with the computer the bad guys have too,” explains Sgt. Ted Schendera with the OPP’s Health and Fraud Unit, based out of the Orillia headquarters detachment.

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre compiles data from year to year; those statistics outline the number of complainants and how much cash was lost. In 2018, more than \$104-million was reported in losses alone but police say the actual number may be closer to nine times as much.

“We figure 95 per cent of the people do not call in because of sheer embarrassment,” Schendera says.

“The numbers are astounding and they’re not going to get any better.”

If you plan to partake in online shopping, police say there are a few things you should keep your eye out for:

- order from a reputable site
- do not click on pop-up screens
- take a look at a site’s return and refund policy.



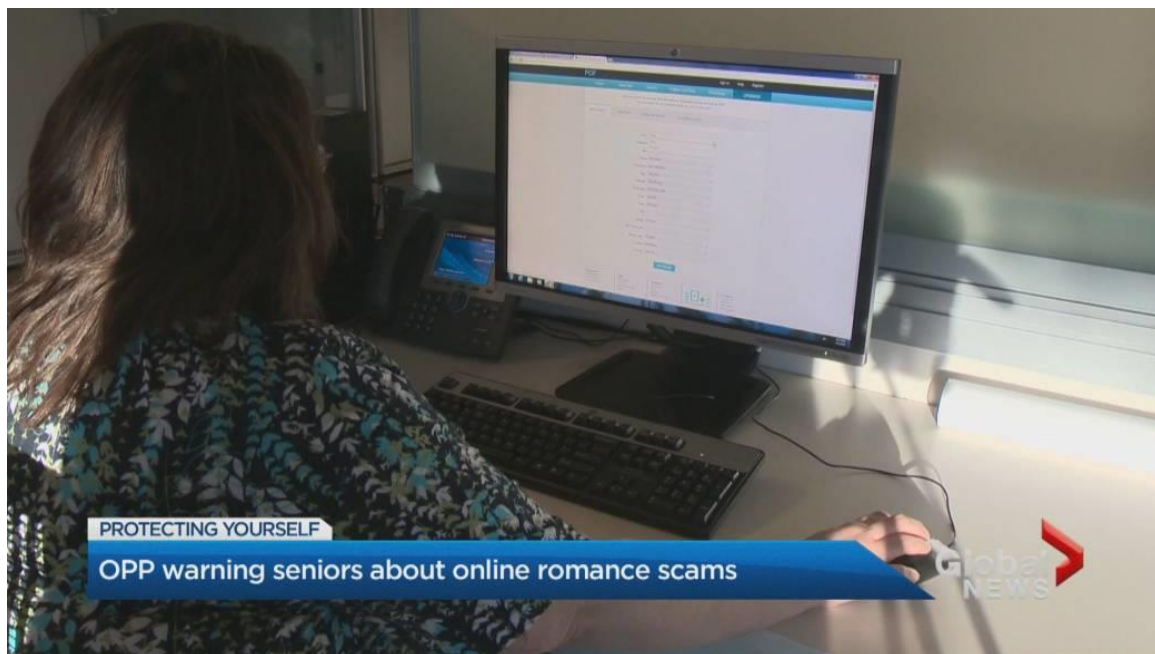
“If you’re on a website and something does pop up, don’t click it. If you’re interested in that particular site, go to the site yourself, don’t click on that because it could be something in relation to a scam,” explains Schedera.

“Take your time when you’re shopping, almost be like you’re window shopping so to speak; look at the sites — research the sites.”

Consumers need to be vigilant, police say, with the holidays being the ideal time for criminals to prey on victims.

“The internet is now a target-rich environment for fraudsters and for exploitative people — in fact it’s a playground of sorts,” adds Simon Sherry, head of the department of Psychology and Neuroscience at Dalhousie University.

Sherry’s area of expertise is in personality traits. He says consumers need to be on the look-out for those who have darker motives.



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“These people can be narcissistic or psychopathic or [Machiavellian](#) or sadistic, and what those traits have in common is an underlying callousness and

unemotionally. They don't care about the use of other people; people are things that can be picked up or put down based on their needs."

This is also an ideal time for romance and phone scams.

"Fraudsters are often exceedingly good at what they do, they can be charming, they can be persuasive and they can be quite strategic in their behavior," explains Sherry.

People are reminded to never share personal information, including your banking, PIN, social insurance number or even your date of birth, as that information can be easily sold online.

"The people that are collecting this data may not be the ones that are actually using it, they'll sell it," explains Schendera.

Anyone who feels they may have fallen victim to an online or phone scam is encouraged to report the information to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre. The agency uses the information to formulate cases and ultimately shut down sites, phone numbers and bank accounts.