

San Francisco

About **News** Wanted and Missing Persons Community Outreach Recruitment

FBI San Francisco
San Francisco Media Office
media.sf@fbi.gov

[X.com](#) [Facebook](#) [Email](#)

December 13, 2023

FBI Warns the Public of Holiday Scam Trends

FBI San Francisco Releases National and Regional Crime Data

SAN FRANCISCO—This holiday season, the FBI San Francisco division warns shoppers to look out for emerging scam trends and reminds the public to stay vigilant when purchasing items online. The FBI anticipates increased fraud schemes designed to steal consumers’ money and personal information this year. During the 2022 holiday shopping season, the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) received reports from almost 12,000 victims resulting in losses of over \$73 million.

The two most prevalent holiday scams that were involved are called **non-delivery and non-payment**. In a non-delivery scam, a buyer pays for goods or services they find online, but those items are never received. Conversely, a non-payment scam involves goods or services being shipped, but the seller is never paid. So far this year, IC3 has already received over 40,000 complaints across the U.S. related to non-payment/non-delivery crimes with losses of approximately \$250 million from January 2023 through October 15, 2023. In the 2022 annual report, these numbers were 51,679 complaints with losses of \$281 million. Locally, within the 15 counties covered by the FBI’s San Francisco field office, 196 complaints related to nonpayment/ non-delivery were reported during November and December last year. Consumers in our Northern District of California reported over \$1 million in losses during the 2022 holiday season. Contra Costa County had the highest dollar amount losses while Alameda County received the highest number of complaints by victims of this scam.

Investment Scams

The FBI also anticipates a higher loss in funds with investment scams this year, primarily due to the increase in Cryptocurrency Confidence scams which are one type of investment scam following particular typologies to scam victims. Cryptocurrency Confidence scams, commonly referred to as “pig butchering” scams, are heavily scripted and contact intensive which occur when a scammer makes contact with a victim—usually on dating and social media apps. After a period of building trust and rapport, the scammer will convince the victim to make investments in cryptocurrency to take advantage of the potential for high-yield returns. To facilitate the investment and demonstrate the returns on investment, victims are directed to websites that appear authentic but are actually controlled by the scammer. After the victim has made several cryptocurrency investments through these fake sites, which purport significant returns, requests by victims to withdraw or cash out their investments are denied for one reason or another. The scammer then vanishes, cutting off contact with the victim, and taking the invested sums with them.

Puppy Scams

Puppy purchase scams are an increasingly prevalent advance-fee/online shopping scam. Fraudsters use social media or other websites to offer puppies for sale and take money but never deliver the animal. They may also ask for additional money for fictitious reasons such as veterinarian bills. From January 1, 2023, through October 15, 2023, IC3 had received about 3,500 complaints related to puppy scams, with about \$6.6 million in losses to the public. Locally, there were 130 reports related to this scam last year. “Fraudsters don’t take holiday breaks. Criminals are increasingly creative in their efforts to prey on unsuspecting shoppers,” said FBI Special Agent in Charge Robert Tripp. “During this gift-giving season, it is important consumers stay vigilant against scams aimed at stealing their money, purchases, and personal data.”

Other Scams to be Mindful of This Season Include:

Online Shopping Scams

Scammers offer deals through phishing e-mails or advertisements.

Social Media Scams

Scammers use social media sites to offer holiday promotions, vouchers, or gift cards by completing surveys designed to compromise your personal information.

Gift Card Scams

Victims receive a spoofed e-mail, call, or text asking them to purchase multiple gift cards for personal or business reasons.

Charity Scams

Criminals set up fake charities and profit from persons who believe they are donating to a legitimate organization.

Smartphone App Scams

Scammers design mobile apps designed as free games that steal your personal information.

Tips to Avoid Being Victimized

- Before shopping online, secure all financial accounts with strong passwords. Use different passwords for each financial account.
- Don’t click suspicious links or attachments in e-mails, websites, or social media. Especially those asking for a password or financial data. This also may result in unknowingly downloading malware to your device.
- If a company asks you to update your password or account information, contact the company on your own using information from their official website.
- Be wary of online retailers offering goods at significantly discounted prices. If a deal seems too good to be true, it likely is.
- Beware of purchases or services that require payment with a gift card.
- Use a credit card vs. a debit card to make purchases and check credit card statements routinely.
- Make charitable contributions directly rather than through an intermediary and beware of organizations with copycat names similar to reputable charities.
- Always get tracking numbers for items you buy online, so you can make sure you can follow the delivery process. Track your order through your original confirmation e-mail.

What to Do if You Are a Victim

- Contact your financial institution immediately upon suspecting or discovering a fraudulent transfer.
- If you believe you have been the victim of a scam, please report it to the FBI at [IC3.gov](https://www.ic3.gov) or contact the FBI San Francisco Field Office at 415-553-7400.

Most Wanted
Ten Most Wanted
Fugitives
Terrorism
Kidnappings / Missing Persons
Seeking Information
Bank Robbers
ECAP
ViCAP

FBI Jobs
Submit a Tip
Crime Statistics
History
FOIPA
Scams & Safety
FBI Kids

News
Stories
Videos
Press Releases
Speeches
Testimony
Podcasts and Radio
Photos
Español
Apps

How We Can Help You
Law Enforcement
Victims
Parents and Caregivers
Students
Businesses
Safety Resources
Need an FBI Service or More Information?

What We Investigate
Terrorism
Counterintelligence
Cyber Crime
Public Corruption
Civil Rights
Organized Crime
White-Collar Crime
Violent Crime
WMD

About
Mission & Priorities
Leadership & Structure
Partnerships
Community Outreach
FAQs

Contact Us
Field Offices
FBI Headquarters
Visit the FBI Experience
Overseas Offices

Additional Resources
Accessibility
eRulemaking
Freedom of Information / Privacy Act
Legal Notices
Legal Policies & Disclaimers
Privacy Policy
USA.gov
White House
No FEAR Act
Equal Opportunity

