



# State of Utah Department of Commerce

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## MEDIA ALERT

### **"Retailers proclaim Thanksgiving Day the new Black Friday", Division of Consumer Protection offers savvy tips to stay safe shopping online or in-person**

*"National Retail Federation (NRF) survey estimates 140 Million shoppers will make gift purchases over Black Friday weekend 2013, with 33M shoppers expected to shop online Thanksgiving Day"*

**(For immediate release...)**

**SALT LAKE CITY, Utah** - Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Department of Commerce, announced today that the Utah Division of Consumer Protection is releasing its annual list of shopping tips ahead of Thanksgiving, Black Friday and Cyber Monday retail events to keep consumers safe and informed. The National Retail Federation (NRF) is estimating 2013 holiday retail sales to hit around \$602.1 Billion, a 3.9 percent increase over 2012 totals.

"Utah consumers are increasingly becoming more comfortable with making purchases using their smart phones, tablets and computers and guess what? Retailers are paying close attention too!" said Francine A. Giani, "Before you click on that flash sale, make sure you are protecting your purchases and personal information to avoid holiday headaches."

This year, consumers will see more promotions sent to them via email, mobile phone texts and in-store with flash sales and other gift card add-on offers to entice holiday spending. According to a Shop.org eHoliday survey, 53.5% of retailers say they plan to offer online deals to consumers beginning Thanksgiving Day and continuing into Black Friday.

### **Tips for shopping smart and safe online**

- 1. Use your Smart phone wisely.** Mobile devices are a convenient resource but may also provide fraudsters with access to your personal and account information. The rule of thumb is be sure that what you are installing comes from a legitimate source, keep an eye on your bill, investigate if your battery runs down quickly and try not to leave your phone unattended. Also, make sure you log off retailers' websites so your information isn't vulnerable to cyber thieves.
- 2. Don't send cash or wire money for payment.** Do not wire money via Western Union, Money Gram, or any other wire service for items purchased online; you maybe giving your money to scammers, and you may never get the item you "ordered." Pay by

credit or charge card to protect your purchases.

3. **Compare prices.** Similar items typically fall into a general price range. Scammers will try to entice victims to their websites with ridiculously low prices.
4. **Research the seller.** Anyone can create a store online. Confirm the online seller's physical address and phone number in case you have any problems or questions.
5. **Keep your anti-virus software up-to-date.** Make sure you have installed the latest firewall and anti-virus software to protect your computer against online attacks.
6. **Enter financial information only on secure sites.** Do not email financial information, like your credit card or checking account number. If you initiate a purchase online, look for indicators that the site is secure. Although no indicator is foolproof, look for a lock icon on the browsers status bar, or a URL address that includes an "s" after http.
7. **Keep a paper trail in a file folder.** Print and save records of all your online transactions, including the product description, price, online receipt, and e-mails in case you need to return a gift after the holidays.
8. **Review the refund policy and delivery rates.** Look to see if you can return a product for a full refund if you are not satisfied. Check out who pays for the cost of shipping a returned item and if the company charges a "restocking" fee back to the consumer.
9. **Consider coupons:** Some companies offer discounts via email, and some websites collect and list codes for free shipping and other discounts. Search for the store with terms like "discount," "coupon" or "free shipping."
10. **Read retailer and product reviews.** Reviews from other people, experts, and columnists can give you an idea of how a product performs. But don't put all of your trust in one review. A brand's reputation for quality and good customer service can really pay off.

For more information on how to protect yourself from scams or to file a complaint, log on to the Utah Division of Consumer Protection website at: [www.consumerprotection.utah.gov](http://www.consumerprotection.utah.gov)

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