

Protect Yourself From Consumer Fraud

Tips to help you be a safer consumer

OFFICE OF ARIZONA ATTORNEY GENERAL

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MAYES



Key Points

- Best practices
- Warning signs
- Top complaints of FY2022
- Top trends
- Filing a consumer complaint with the AGO
- Resources



Best Practices

- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is
- Do your research
- Credit cards are the safest way to pay
- Avoid wire transfers/gift card purchases for strangers
- Check your bank and credit card statements regularly
- Protect your personal information



Warning Signs

- High-pressure tactics and urgency
- Demands for personal information or money
- Unsolicited communications (calls, emails, texts)
- Promises of free goods or services



Warning Signs

- Red flags in advertising and online listings
 - Prices being extremely low
 - Spelling/Grammatical errors in posting
 - Unusual payment methods
 - Countdown when things are in the cart
 - A newer website with not much information



Top 5 Consumer Complaints from 2022

AGO Report



Motor Vehicle

Some auto dealerships and repair shops may mislead or deceive you about the terms of a purchase or vehicle repair.

- Buying a Car
 - Research price/value of vehicle
 - Check financing rates with your bank before purchase
 - Check the title
 - Make sure contract has no blank spaces
- Car Repairs
 - Get quotes in writing
 - Don't pay for anything you did not authorize



Mortgage and Real Estate

Scammers may pretend to be escrow officers, real estate agents, or the lender to attempt to get the prospective homeowner to wire funds to illegitimate sources.

- Work with reputable lenders/agents
- Be wary of unsolicited offers or online ads
- Never wire money for a down payment
- Read and understand contracts and paperwork before you sign
 - Don't be afraid to ask for help
- Do not sign any agreement, lease or contract that has blank spaces



Mortgage and Real Estate Common Scams

- Escrow wire fraud
- Loan flipping and predatory lenders
- Foreclosure relief
- Reverse mortgage scams
- Fake listings and rental scams
- Bait-and-switch prices



Mortgage and Real Estate Scams

Moving Scams

Movers may quote a low price and charge the consumer a higher price after the service is done resulting in “hostage loads” until the consumer pays the higher price.

- Research moving companies
- Get all quotes in writing
- Beware of extremely low estimates
- Ask about charges or additional fees
- Do not pay cash or a large deposit before the move
- Make sure you have the proper insurance
- Get copies of everything you sign



Computer/Internet Webpages

Scammers often copy websites that you go to regularly, prompting those with accounts to log in, hoping you will give the scammer access to your personal information.

- Always verify the web address (URL) of the webpage and look for the lock before entering personal information
- Be wary of unsolicited emails or pop-ups
- Use strong passwords
- Never share passwords
- Regularly keep software updated
 - Install security on computers



Telemarketing and Unsolicited Texts

Scammers will contact you pretending to be affiliated with reputable businesses and claim to have enticing offers, but need your information to give you the offer.

- Don't trust caller ID
- Don't give out personal information, especially to incoming callers
- Hang up and call back using a number you look up
- Don't be intimidated
- Sign up for the Do Not Call registry



Legitimate businesses will never require personal info when giving out special offers



Telecommunication

(Internet Service Providers, Cell Phones, Pay TV, Etc.)

Scammers will often target your service provider information. Scammers will then pose as your service provider by calling or texting requesting personal information, or giving you alternative payment instructions.

- Don't trust Caller ID
 - Hang up and contact provider with a number you look up to make sure it was not a scam
- Keep personal account information safe (including payment information)
- Don't pay bills or service providers using a gift card



Other Common Scams To Look Out For



Gift Card Purchases

Gift cards may be the perfect present, but they can also be a perfect tool for scammers to use to get your money.

- Do not pay for services or fees with a gift card
- No legitimate business or government agency will ask you to pay with a gift card
- Treat gift cards like cash



Home Repair

A person or contractor offers home repair services for a low cost, often claiming they have materials left over from another job.

- Use a licensed contractor – jobs over \$1,000 require licensed contractors
 - Registrar of Contractors – roc.az.gov
- Research contractor and ask for references
- Do not pay full amount up front
- Ask for everything in writing and read contracts carefully
 - Do not sign anything you do not understand
 - Ask for help if needed
 - Don't be afraid to negotiate terms of contract
 - Don't sign a contract or agreement with blank spaces



Door-to-Door Sales

A stranger approaches your home using high-pressure or fraudulent tactics to sell you a product or service, often at a low price or limited time offer.

- Post a “No Soliciting” sign on front door
- Ask for identification and verify credentials of person and business
- Don’t pay in advance for a product or service. Do your research first
- Don’t let sales people in your home
- There is a 3-day right to cancel purchases made from a door-to-door salesmen
 - Cancellation should be made in writing



Government Imposters

Scammers will contact consumers pretending to be government officials claiming that you owe money. Common ruses include IRS scams, jury duty scams, and Social Security Administration Scams.

- Be skeptical
- Government agencies will not call and threaten to arrest you
- Contact agency directly if you have questions
- Do not pay government agencies with gift cards



Friends and Family (AKA the Grandparent Scam)

Scammers may exploit personal relationships with friends or family members and manipulate the target asking for money due to an emergency.

- Ask questions to verify the identity of the person
- Contact another family member related to the person they are claiming to be
- Never send money if skeptical about where it may be going or identity of the caller



Online Romance Scams

Scammers have been known to create fake online accounts and use the promise of love and companionship to trick people into sending them money or paying for expenses.

- Set social media accounts to private
- Think carefully about what you post about yourself
- Be suspicious of unsolicited messages and requests from strangers
- Research the names and back story of people you meet online
- Be wary of anyone who asks for money or favors
- Video chat before meeting in person



Online Romance Scams



Identity Theft Warning Signs

Identity theft can be devastating. Know the warning signs and what to do if you become a victim.

WARNING SIGNS

- Withdrawals from your bank account that you can't explain
- Bills from medical providers for services you didn't use
- Phone calls from debt collectors about debts that aren't yours
- Notice from the IRS that you filed more than one tax return
- Unfamiliar accounts or charges on your credit report



Identity Theft: What to do Right Away

- Place a fraud alert/credit freeze and get your credit reports
- Call companies where fraud occurred
- File report with local law enforcement agency
- File report with FTC at [Identitytheft.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/identity-theft)



After Filing a Consumer Complaint

- The office will send a letter of acknowledgement with the status of your complaint
- Your complaint will be reviewed
- With your permission, the office can forward your complaint to the company or individual named for their response

*We cannot provide any legal advice. If you wish to seek an attorney, you can locate one by contacting the Lawyer Referral Service, or using the [State Bar of Arizona](#) website.



Resources

Arizona Attorney General's Office



- Phoenix: (602) 542-5763
- Tucson: (520) 628-6648
- Consumerinfo@azag.gov
- www.azag.gov

Better Business Bureau



- (Toll-free): 1-877-291-6222
- info@bbbcommunity.org
- Bbb.org

Federal Trade Commission



- FTC.gov
- DoNotCall.gov

Credit Reporting Agencies



- annualcreditreport.com
- Equifax: (866)349-5191
- Transunion: (800)916-8800
- Experian:(888)397-3742



ANY QUESTIONS?

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

602-542-2123

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THANK YOU

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