



Better Business Bureau Serving Northwestern Ohio and Southeastern Michigan

Facebook Scams Cheat Older Consumers

"I saw this ad on Facebook for masks to protect against the coronavirus. I clicked on the link and it looked very reliable so I entered my credit card number and ordered several of them. It has been weeks and I haven't received anything. I went back to Facebook but the ad has disappeared. The phone number (to a foreign country) is disconnected. What can I do now?"

Every day we get calls and emails from consumers who are cheated by popup ads on Facebook. Many are from older folks who don't know how to check out the company or the ads; they just figure if the ad is on Facebook it must be legitimate.

There are scores of scams on Facebook. In the cases of simple rackets like popup ads that are "too good to be true," BBB tries to track down the selling company, but the victim may only have an email address or phone number, both useless. We can then counsel the victim on how to file a charge back with their credit card company. They often ask us why Facebook allows scam ads on their web site, and we know that the company tries to monitor this situation and remove the junk ads; but the volume of these scams is astronomical. Biggest Facebook scams we see include:

- "Friend" requests. You get a message from a "friend" telling you about a great deal or even a government grant program ("Coronavirus stimulus \$10,000 grant you never need to repay. Call (XXX) XXX-XXXX and they can arrange the grant. It worked for me! I got the money!") These messages are often complete scams. Don't assume your friend sent them; their address book was probably hacked and the fake message sent out looking like it came from them.
- Surveys. They seem innocent and often have a gift card or nice prize for participating. But they are used to harvest information about you for identity or account theft.
- Requests to verify your Facebook account. No! In general, any message you receive over the internet – including Facebook – asking "verification" of an account number and wanting your information is always a scam.
- ad sellers on the Facebook Marketplace. Never buy an item on the Facebook Marketplace unless you can physically inspect it. If you are making a purchase, arrange to meet the seller at an appropriate safe location like the police department parking lot.

NEXT: Price Gouging. You have seen both the Ohio and Michigan Attorneys General warn about extreme price gouging during the coronavirus pandemic. Here is one example. Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost is taking an Athens couple to court for allegedly hoarding hundreds of bottles of hand sanitizer during the COVID-19 pandemic and selling them online for 11 times the retail price. They rapidly acquired bulk quantities of hand sanitizer and listed them for sale, jacking up the price by as much as 1,017.3%. For example, Marcus and Ellen Fultz charged \$39.44 for 8-ounce bottles of Purell Advanced Hand Sanitizer Refreshing Gel, a product that cost \$3.53 on Amazon prior to the pandemic. They took in almost \$ 27,000.

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