



Better Business Bureau® of Central and Northern Alberta

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MEDIA ADVISORY

'Tis the Season for Financial Crimes against Seniors

Better Business Bureau Shares Holiday Safety Tips

(December 1, 2005 - **Edmonton, AB**) -- Not everyone is full of goodwill during the holidays. Unfortunately, the holidays are prime time for financial crimes – identity theft, robbery and fraud – and seniors are often the target.

Seniors fall prey to fraud for a variety of reasons. They are generally more accessible by telephone and mail; are trusting and willing to listen; may have limited experience with investments; and are deeply concerned with maintaining finances to last them throughout their lives. Furthermore, many older people may be embarrassed to admit they've been "had" by a scam artist.

To safeguard against financial crimes this holiday season, the Better Business Bureau offers these timely tips for seniors and those who care for them:

Hang on to your personal information. Do not give any personal information over the phone or Internet to an unfamiliar company or caller. This includes your credit card numbers, Social Insurance Number, driver's license number, bank account numbers, and personal information, such as your mother's maiden name. Even if you are told it is only for "identification" or "verification" purposes, this information can be used for unauthorized credit card charges or bank account debits. Tell the person to send their request to you in the mail and that you will check out their record with the Better Business Bureau.

Use direct deposit. Your mail – both incoming and outgoing – can be vulnerable, especially during the holidays when criminal activity is heightened. If your Canada Pension or Old Age Security payments are delivered by mail to an unlocked box, you may be at risk for theft. Direct deposit eliminates the risk of lost or stolen checks, reduces fraud and gives people faster access to their money on payment day. Direct deposit also protects against identity theft. For more information about direct deposit of your Canada Pension or Old Age Security phone 1-800-277-9914 or online at www.sdc.gc.ca/en/isp/common/dirdeposit.shtml.

Many older Canadian enjoy the convenience of online holiday shopping. Remember it's best to use a credit card as a payment option and to check that the Internet connection is secure. Under provincial law you can dispute the charges if you don't get what you were promised, or if the product is not delivered within the stated time

period. Many credit card issuers also have a “zero liability” policy for unauthorized charges in the event your credit card number is stolen.

Arm yourself with information. The Better Business Bureau offers safe shopping advice and other helpful tips at the www.edmontonbbb.org web site. When in doubt, always check it out. Consult with trusted family members, friends or neighbors before making a major purchasing decision. PhoneBusters (1-888-495-8501) are a key role in educating the public about specific fraudulent telemarketing pitches.

Whenever you have a question or concern regarding a merchant or marketplace transaction, contact your local Better Business Bureau (780) 482-2341 (available Monday-Friday 8:30am - 4:00pm), toll free 1-800-232-7298, or at www.edmontonbbb.org.

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