

## **ALERT: FACEBOOK MARKETPLACE SCAMS**

Facebook is a platform where you can seemingly get it all: updates about your friends, cute baby pics, news stories or romantic dates. But its marketplace, where people go to quickly buy and sell merchandise, is also a place fraught with scams. One billion users buy and sell goods on Facebook Marketplace each month. Unfortunately, like with most things in life, there are bad actors ready to take advantage of a technology for their own financial gain. Scams are an unfortunate reality on any selling platform. Oftentimes the scam is one we've seen before but made new using this new service.

Here are Facebook Marketplace scams to be aware of:

### **Fake home and apartment listings**

- Scammers pose as property agents, owners or landlords to post properties they have no right to sell or rent.
- They then use high pressure tactics to get the victim to send money, such as "this is a hot market," "I have tons of bidders," "If you send the deposit or down payment now, I can reserve you the apartment."
- Sometimes they use properties they know are unoccupied and invite the buyer to view the property without them. Use caution if you cannot get into a property.
- To protect yourself, use verified real estate services.
- Use Google reverse image search to see if the property is posted elsewhere.
- Do not pay without signing paperwork.

### **Fake vehicle listings**

- Same type of scam as phone apartment listings in which the bad actor asks for a deposit or payment up front.
- In this scam the scammer does not own the car and does not intend to provide it.
- They may claim the vehicle has eBay purchase protection, but this only applies to vehicles bought on eBay.

### **Shipping insurance scam**

- This scam occurs where the buyer agrees to buy an item and pay for the shipping if seller pays for the insurance.
- The phony buyer then generates a fake shipping invoice from UPS/USPS/FedEx and often quotes \$50-100 shipping insurance.
- Once the seller pays the buyer the insurance, they never hear from the buyer again.

### **Stealing your information scam**

- Once a seller or buyer agrees on a purchase, the other party claims they want to verify your ID to protect themselves.
- They will ask for your personal identifying information, which can be used to create fake accounts, to obtain credit in your name or to answer questions if they try to hack into your online accounts.

- The fraudster may tell you that you'll receive a text code to your phone number and ask for the code to verify who you are. The scammer then uses your number as verification or set up a Google Voice number connected to your phone number.

**It may be a scam if**

- If you are asked to switch to a different platform, such as text or WhatsApp, it may be a scam.
- If the deal is too good to be true, the goods may very well be fake, broken, stolen or non-existent.
- Being asked to pay via gift card or cryptocurrency is a red flag.

Facebook Marketplace is convenient and useful platform, but make sure you are aware of common scams, so you don't get defrauded. Remember, when meeting in person to exchange goods and payment, be sure it is in a lighted, public and safe space. Also, consider using Facebook Messenger's "checkout" feature, which keeps a record of all transactions.