



PRESS RELEASE

December 5, 2016

Colorado Department of Law
Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman

AG Coffman Urges Colorado Consumers to Be Cautious When Making Donations and Purchases this Holiday Season

Coloradans are generous, with close to 80% of adults making charitable donations, but nearly half of donors aren't properly vetting the charity before they give.

DENVER, CO – As Colorado celebrates Colorado Gives Day tomorrow, Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman wants to encourage Coloradans to always check the charity before they give and ensure that their hard-earned money is actually going to support the causes they care about.

Those wishing to make a donation on Colorado Gives Day can go to <https://www.coloradogives.org/cogivesday> and feel confident that the charities listed by ColoradoGives.org are recognized by the Internal Revenue Service and the Secretary of State, and are in good standing. Potential donors can also go to www.checkthecharity.com which provides access to a charity's detailed filings, information about the organization's mission, leadership, tax-exempt status, financial efficiency and the paid solicitors with whom they have contracted.

In addition, this year the Attorney General is offering the *Attorney General's Consumer Holiday Guide* in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#). The guide provides important tips and information to help keep Coloradans safe this season whether shopping in stores or online. Both versions of the guide can be found at www.stopfraudcolorado.gov

“Coloradans are incredibly generous and committed to supporting charitable organizations in our state, and it is something we all should be proud of,” said Attorney General Coffman. “Unfortunately the holiday season also can bring out unscrupulous people who will prey on unsuspecting donors and shoppers. That is why it is so important that everyone do a little

research before sending their donations and are aware of potential safety and security issues when holiday shopping.”

A recent survey by AARP Foundation ElderWatch found that while close to 80% percent of Colorado adults ages 18 and older have made a charitable donation in the last twelve months, 46% of donors never verified the legitimacy of where they donated, and 64% said they didn't ask the fundraiser how much of their donation goes to the cause. The full ElderWatch report is available [here](#). A summary infographic is available [here](#).

Some red flags of charity fraud include:

- Charities or fundraisers that refuse to provide detailed information about their identity, mission, costs, or how the donation will be used.
- Charities that use names closely resembling those of better-known organizations.
- Organizations that thank you for a pledge you don't remember making.
- Those that use high-pressure tactics to get you to donate immediately.
- Anyone asking for donations in cash or by wire transfer.
- Those that offer to send a courier to collect your donation immediately.
- Any organization that guarantees sweepstakes winnings in exchange for a contribution.

Big crowds, lots of excitement, and sometimes fast, last-minute shopping can cause consumers to forget some basic tips for staying safe during the holiday season when they are out shopping in stores.

Whenever possible shoppers should:

- Shop during daylight hours.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Stay alert to your surroundings.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Keep your cash or wallet in your front pocket.
- Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason. At this time of year, con-artists may try various methods of distracting you with the intention of taking your money or belongings.
- When you have to leave packages in your car, lock them in the trunk so they are not visible to other people walking by.
- Don't hesitate to ask store or mall security if you need an escort out to your car after dark.

An increasing number of people are choosing to do their holiday shopping on the internet, and while doing so can be easy and fast, there are still online hazards to avoid.

To stay “Cyber Safe” this holiday season:

- Make sure your computer and Internet browser security features are installed and contain the most current updates.
- Avoid unsolicited e-mails, text messages, and pop-up advertisements.
- Only shop on secured sites—look for websites that begin with “https” and/or display a small padlock in the bottom right corner of the site or in the address bar at the top.

- Shop with online merchants you are familiar with or whose reputation you can readily determine.
- Confirm a working customer service number you can contact if you have further questions or product issues.
- Be suspicious of websites offering consumer goods at unbelievably low prices, especially on popular items such as brand name electronics.
- Make your online purchases with a credit card—federal law limits your exposure to \$50 if your credit card is used improperly. Plus, you can charge back any purchases you think were fraudulent. Avoid companies that require less conventional forms of payment, such as money orders, electronic funds transfers, money transmitters (Western Union/MoneyGram), or the purchase of prepaid payment devices. Do not, under any circumstances, provide your checking account number.

If you believe you have been victimized by a scam or wish to report suspicious activity, please file a report at www.stopfraudcolorado.gov/report.

#

CONTACT

Annie Skinner
Colorado Attorney General's Office
720-508-6553
Annie.skinner@coag.gov