



SAFETY TIPS FOR BUYING & SELLING GOODS OVER THE INTERNET COURTESY OF THE BROWARD SHERIFF'S OFFICE

There is no doubt technology has made buying and selling goods much easier. More and more people are relying on online classifieds or trade sites to look for work, buy or sell items, rent homes or find lost items. Sadly, criminals are also utilizing this technology to rob unsuspecting victims of their money and property – even worse, some predators use it to sexually assault victims.

In numerous cases reported across the country, victims have been duped out of cash for apartments or vacation homes that were never available or owned by the advertiser, women have been raped when responding to ads for employment, stolen merchandise has been peddled and identities have been stolen. Since there is no screening or regulation, anybody can use a site such as Craigslist – even criminals.

While it is never the intent of the Broward Sheriff's Office to scare anyone from utilizing technology, including online trade sites, you should be fully aware of the criminal element who utilizes such sites.

If you use Craigslist or know someone who does, please follow these safety tips:

- ✓ Meet with a buyer or seller in the parking lot of a police station or district office (for a list of BSO district offices, visit our website: www.sheriff.org under the Law Enforcement tab). If the person refuses to meet in a safe place you should find another buyer or seller.
- ✓ Never wire money or transfer funds to make a purchase from online trade sites.
- ✓ Never rent or buy a property without first seeing it on the inside (make sure you do not go inside the property alone), then check county records to verify the name of the property owner. If renting a vacation home, reserve making payments until you arrive at your destination.
- ✓ When applying for a job, do not agree to a credit check or background check unless you meet the person placing the ad face-to-face at his or her place of business.
- ✓ Trust your gut instinct – if something about a buyer or seller seems strange – it probably is.
- ✓ If you believe someone is dealing in stolen property, please call your local law enforcement agency to report it immediately.

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