

Consumer News

Office of Consumer Affairs



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County of Summit Office of Consumer Affairs Offers Holiday Shopping Tips

"With the holiday shopping season upon us, consumers should create a gift list and budget plan to help make a smooth shopping experience," said Cynthia Sich, Director of the Summit County Office of Consumer Affairs. "Below are tips to help shoppers avoid problems that typically occur during the holiday season."

- ✓ Make a shopping list and stick to it. Watch for sale flyers and coupons from stores or search the Internet to see the "Black Friday" ads that have been posted early. Take them with you but make sure you read the sales promotion end date.
- ✓ Check store refund and return policies. Verify if the refund issued is by cash refund, in-store credit or exchange. Ask if there are restocking fees. Many times retailers, especially electronic items, have restocking fees associated with them.
- ✓ Be prepared for broken items, wrong sizes or colors, and duplicate gifts. Always save shopping receipts for 90 days after your purchase or ask for "gift receipt."
- ✓ Be careful buying an item which offers a mail-in rebate. While the price for the item, including the rebate, may be a good one, consumers need to read the terms of the rebate carefully. Most offers require you to cut the UPC code off the box which may be difficult to do if the item is a gift.
- ✓ Check your accounts daily for any activity you did not initiate and read all monthly account statements for errors. This is especially needed during the busy holiday shopping season.
- ✓ Are you still paying for gifts in January, February or beyond? Check with stores to see if they offer layaway and make a cash budget and stick to it.
- ✓ Buy "safer" toys. With millions of toys being recalled, consumers should ask if the manufacturer of that toy has had recalls. Some retailers are placing boards in their stores with the latest product safety recalls; or visit Consumer Product Safety Commission web site <http://www.recalls.gov/index.html>.
- ✓ Keep shopping bags, purses, and wallets close to you. Put your money or credit card back into your wallet or purse after the purchase and put it away. Crumple fresh bills so that they will not stick together when paying. Women, remember to zip shut or close your purse.
- ✓ Carry only a few shopping bags. Return to your vehicle frequently to unload purchases in the trunk and make sure to have your keys in your free hand when approaching your car. Consider moving your car to another parking space.
- ✓ Think outside the gift box. Plenty of alternatives are less expensive, and more fun. Have family gift exchanges where you purchase only one gift or make and exchange homemade items or be creative by giving coupons for shoveling grandma's driveway.

HAVE A SAFE & WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SHOPPING SEASON!