

ALABAMA SECURITIES COMMISSION  
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## **YOU MAY NOT WANT A LOT FOR CHRISTMAS, BUT FRAUDSTERS DO!**

**Montgomery, AL (December 23, 2019)** - The hustle and bustle of the holiday season is here. “What dish should I bring to office Christmas party, what can I get my mother-in-law, and will the weather affect my travel plans” are questions many of us will have this holiday season. The Alabama Securities Commission (ASC) would like to pass along a list before the holiday rush consumes you to help safeguard yourself from financial fraudsters and thieves.

- 1) Do not advertise what Santa Claus brought you this year by placing the empty boxes of expensive and popular gifts on the street for would-be thieves to see. If you have large boxes to discard, take them to the nearest recycling center and dispose of them there; a big television box sitting in your front yard for trash pickup can be a red flag for thieves to break into your home.
- 2) Porch Pirates (a nickname for thieves that steal boxes delivered to your home) believe that it is better to receive than give. Many of us have security cameras to help deter this type of invasion, but Porch Pirates are willing to risk being caught in exchange for the loot on your porch. We suggest having shipments sent to a retailer or safe pickup location requiring your identification to receive. If you are having packages coming to your home, use your retailer’s tracking system on your cell phone and plan on being there to receive the packages.
- 3) Be very cautious of where you charge your phone or tablet through a public device. “Juice Jacking” is one of the latest methods that hackers are using to hack into our electronic devices to access personal information. The best way to protect yourself from being a victim of this scam may be to buy a portable charging device to charge your electronics when traveling this season or to purchase and use a USB data-blocker device when charging your phone or computers via a public USB charging station.
- 4) Gift cards can be an easy solution to get for someone who appears to have everything. Scammers have figured out ways to access the money that you put on gift cards by capturing the card number and the information on the back of the card. They are notified when money is put on the card and then take the money immediately, leaving your family member or friend stunned when they try to use the card and find out it has a zero balance. Inspect the gift card before you purchase it and pick a new one if the packaging looks to be tampered with.
- 5) If someone gifts you with a great investment opportunity this holiday season, check it out! Timing is an important factor in a successful fraud and what a great time it is for fraudsters to camouflage their investment scheme as an act of good will towards his fellow man. “The New Year is right around the corner and I have a once-in-a lifetime investment opportunity for you starting in 2020” is a hook a fraudster may use to coax in a new victim. In order to protect yourself from an investment fraud, call the Alabama Securities Commission at 1-800-222-1253 and make sure the person making the offer is licensed and his or her product is registered.

The Alabama Securities Commission (ASC) regulates the “main street” investing industry in Alabama. ASC is

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committed to protecting investors against securities fraud and provides aggressive enforcement actions against any firm or individual who has violated the Alabama Securities Act or other state and federal statutes to the detriment of Alabama investors. The Alabama Securities Act provides for the licensing and regulation of securities broker-dealers, agents, investment advisers and investment adviser representatives, and financial planners.

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For more information contact Dan Lord, Education and Public Affairs Manager, 334-353-4858.

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