



Press Releases

November 30, 2016

CONSUMER ALERT

MADIGAN & BBB ENCOURAGE CONSUMERS TO USE CAUTION WHEN SHIPPING GIFTS INTERNATIONALLY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan and the Better Business Bureau of Chicago and Northern Illinois today urged Illinois residents who send holiday gifts internationally to follow important tips to avoid being scammed and paying expensive fees when packages are “lost,” stolen or delayed.

“Unfortunately, scam artists take advantage of generosity during the holiday season when many people ship gifts internationally to their families and friends,” Madigan said. “We’ve seen too many instances where people pay excessive fees and packages never arrive because they are ‘lost’ or stolen. Consumers must investigate a business before shipping their gifts and contact my office or the BBB if their gifts never arrive.”

“The cost of shipping internationally can be steep especially during the holiday season, but consumers need to be very cautious when they go looking for a great deal, which can leave them disappointed at best or ripped-off at worse,” said Steve J. Bernas, BBB president and CEO.

Madigan and Bernas urged consumers to follow these tips when shipping packages internationally:

- **Compare shipping companies.** There are multiple companies that offer international shipping service for packages. As a general rule of thumb, the larger the shipping company, the more reliable the service, the stronger the support infrastructure and the better insurance product for customers. Before choosing a shipper, evaluate the free Better Business Reviews, which are available at www.bbb.org. Consumers also can call Madigan’s Consumer Fraud Hotline at 1-800-386-5438 to inquire about whether the Attorney General’s office has received any complaints about certain shippers.
- **Ship packages early to allow for shipping delays.** The holidays are the busiest time of year to ship packages, and you should always expect delays. Always double check with the shipper about deadlines for shipping.
- **Understand how you are being charged.** Determine if the shipment charge is done by weight or by cubic inch, as it may vary by shipping company. Prices also vary whether you decide to ship via air or sea. Determine what best meets your needs and budget before making a decision.
- **Take inventory.** Create and keep a detailed inventory of the items, including pictures of the items you are shipping, along with the value of each item.
- **Keep copies of all required documents.** Every country has specific document requirements for international shipments, including a receipt of goods for transport that specifies the terms of delivery. Make sure you have filled out all the required forms and keep copies on file. Any time you send a package abroad, be sure to have the tracking number, delivery confirmation and insurance information.

If consumers who ship a package experience an issue or delay, they can contact The Federal Maritime Commission, <http://www.fmc.gov/>, which regulates U.S. international ocean transportation and is the registrar for international shippers.

Madigan urged consumers affected by an international packaging scam to file a complaint with her office by calling her Consumer Fraud Hotline at 1-800-386-5438. Consumers also can file a complaint on Madigan’s [website](#) and with the BBB at www.bbb.org.

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