



Public Service Announcement

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION



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CYBER CRIMINALS USING PHOTO-SHARING PROGRAMS TO COMPROMISE COMPUTERS

The FBI has seen an increase in cyber criminals who use online photo-sharing programs to perpetrate scams and harm victims' computers. These criminals advertise vehicles online but will not provide pictures in the advertisement. They will send photos on request. Sometimes the photo is a single file sent as an e-mail attachment, and sometimes the victim receives a link to an online photo gallery.

The photos can/often contain malicious software that infects the victims' computer, directing them to fake websites that look nearly identical to the real site where they originally saw the advertisement. The cyber criminals run all aspects of these fake websites, including "tech support" or "live chat support," and any "recommended" escrow services. After the victim agrees to purchase the item and makes the payment, the criminals stop responding to correspondence. The victims never receive any merchandise.

The FBI urges consumers to protect themselves when shopping online. Here are a few tips for staying safe:

- Be cautious if you are on an auction site and lose an auction and the seller contacts you later saying the original bidder fell through.
- Make sure websites are secure and authenticated before you purchase an item online. Use only well-known escrow services.
- Research to determine if a car dealership is real and how long it has been in business.
- Be wary if the price for the item you'd like to buy is severely undervalued; if it is, the item is likely fraudulent.
- Scan files before downloading them to your computer.
- Keep your computer software, including the operating system, updated with the latest patches.
- Ensure your anti-virus software and firewalls are current – they can help prevent malware infections.

If you have fallen victim to this type of scam, file a complaint with the Internet Crime Complaint Center, <https://www.ic3.gov/>