

SCAM REPORT
MILTON TOWNSHIP S.A.L.T. COUNCIL MEETING OCTOBER 10, 2023
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Brushing Scam

Background: A brushing scam is a fraudulent scheme in which you receive a package containing items you did not order. Your name and address appear on the shipping label as the receiver. The sender's return address is missing from the label or may be one from a large online retailer. When you open the package, there is no invoice or other billing information inside. Unknown to you at the time, you may be the victim of a "brushing" scam and your personal information could be at risk.

How it works: After shipping you the merchandise, the company posts fake positive online reviews of the products using your name and address. The company's objective is to create the impression that you are a verified buyer who is posting the reviews. Online sellers rely heavily on favorable reviews from customers to boost the ratings and sales of their products. If the authenticity of a review is questioned, the company produces the tracking record confirming the items were shipped to a verified buyer and the review is legitimate.

This may appear at first to be a victimless crime. However, if you received a package of unsolicited items, your personal information may have been compromised and is accessible to criminals lurking on the internet. This information is captured through data breaches, hacker attacks, and malware infections, and can be used by scammers to steal money from you in the future.

Steps to take if you receive an unsolicited package

- Change your passwords for all online shopping and financial accounts. Make sure your passwords are long, strong, and unique. Consider using a password manager, two-factor authentication (2FA), and biometric authentication when available.
- Regularly monitor your financial accounts for unusual activity. Consider monitoring your accounts online daily rather than waiting for monthly or quarterly paper statements.
- Regularly monitor your credit. Consider placing a security freeze at the three national credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion).
- Do not call or email the sender. They will attempt to elicit more personal information from you if you contact them.
- Do not send money to pay for the items. Recipients of unsolicited merchandise are permitted to keep items they did not order without paying for them.
- If the package is unopened and includes a return address, you may mark it "Return to Sender" and the USPS will return it at no cost to you.
- If the sender contacts you and asks you to return the items and you agree to do so, be sure the sender covers the cost of the return.
- Notify the following agencies:
 - US Postal Inspection Service (www.uspis.gov; 1-877-876-2455),
 - FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (www.ic3.gov),
 - Federal Trade Commission (www.ftc.gov; 1-877-382-4357),
 - Illinois Attorney General Senior Citizens Consumer Fraud Hotline (1-800-243-5377), and
 - Your local police department.

[Source: US Postal Inspection Service]

NOTE: *This scam is called a brushing scam because a scammer can point to a verified buyer to "brush aside" suspicion that the review of an item purchased online is fraudulent.*