



News

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BBB – Rockford Regional Office

Rockford, IL 61101

815.963.2226

815.323.8419 (cell)

815.963.0329 (fax)

www.bbb.org

Contact: Dennis Horton

BBB - Rockford Regional Office

dhorton@chicago.bbb.org

"Steals and Deals" Has New Meaning for Cyber-Shopping Consumers: Beware of Fake Apps

ROCKFORD – November 28, 2016 – Always looking for and coming up with new ways to rip-off the unsuspecting, for scammers and cyber-thieves, it really is Christmas! This year for shoppers – especially for those doing a lot of online buying and downloading apps to their mobile devices – new dangers are lurking. Hundreds of fake retail and product apps have popped up in Apple's "App Store" and Google's "Play Store" in recent weeks.

Apps have become a popular way to shop, particularly for people looking for deals. But there are serious risks, especially to using a fake app. Entering credit card information opens a consumer to potential financial fraud. Some fake apps contain malware that can steal personal information or even lock the phone until the user pays a ransom.

Starbucks started the first "retail app", and many stores have followed but, [security experts say](#), the biggest source of the fake apps is China.

"Cyber-thieves have also found ways to make their counterfeit apps convenient; they encourage users to log in using their Facebook credentials," says Dennis Horton, director of the Rockford Regional Office of the Better Business Bureau. "That could dangerously expose their sensitive personal information to identity theft."

"Because there are so many apps available shoppers can easily be confused but there are many red flags to look for," notes Horton.

The BBB advises app users to take a closer look at the fine print before putting it on their phones and to take these precautions:

- Check when it was developed, what version it's on, who was the publisher and look for customer reviews. If you pull up a major retailer's app and it has no reviews, then you're probably on the wrong one.
- Check the link connected to the app to see if you're being directed to the retailer's legitimate website.
- Never click on a link in any email to download a new app. Only go to the website of the retailer to get a link to the legitimate app.
- Check ask.bbb.org for additional scam information and also [safe online shopping](#).

Horton also recommends, "Use a credit card, because card companies typically have restitution plans that can save you if you fall victim. Using your debit card on the other hand can have you losing everything you have in the bank."

Shoppers who encounter a fake app should immediately notify [Apple](#) or [Google](#). The information can also be reported to [BBB Scam Tracker](#) in an effort to help track down where the scam is coming from.

To find trustworthy businesses AT NO COST and for more important consumer information visit <http://ask.bbb.org/>, also like us on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) and add us on [Pinterest](#).

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