

Anglers, hunters warned of online scams when purchasing licenses

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Body

Oct. 11-- Oct. 11--WILKES-BARRE -- Before you go fishing or hunting for a new license to enjoy those outdoor sports, beware of online scams.

So says the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) and Pennsylvania Game Commission, who Thursday issued a joint warning to anglers and hunters to avoid online scams when purchasing their licenses.

The warning follows several recent reports of customers paying for licenses through third-party websites not affiliated with either agency, and then never receiving a license.

"The only proven, reputable and reliable methods for purchasing Pennsylvania fishing licenses and permits are through the PFBC's online portal The Outdoor Shop or in-person from a retail license issuing agent," said Bernie Matscavage, Director of the PFBC Bureau of Administration. "If you choose to use a third-party website offering to sell you a fishing license, you risk wasting your money and putting your personal information at risk."

The Game Commission, which sells hunting and furtaking licenses and permits through The Outdoor Shop, has received similar reports from hunters and trappers who tried to purchase their licenses online through unaffiliated vendors and never received them.

Customers should be aware of several look-a-like websites that mimic the agencies' branding and offer customers the ability to purchase licenses and related permits. In one case, an imposter website uses a logo closely resembling the PFBC logo and offers to "broker" or "simplify" the purchase of a fishing license for an added fee, in some cases up to \$50 (a resident Pennsylvania fishing license costs just \$22.90). The customer is then asked to provide personal information, including their social security number, as well as payment information to complete the online transaction. After submitting their information, the customer is informed that they will receive a printable, electronic version of their fishing license within 72 hours.

"There is absolutely no advantage to using a third-party website to buy a license," added Matscavage. "Customers to these websites are being asked to provide the same information as they would if they purchased a license securely through the agencies directly. The difference is that by using a third-party site, you are paying an unnecessary added fee, compromising your identity, and will likely not end up receiving a license at all."

When you purchase your fishing license from the PFBC through the Outdoor Shop, a printable electronic version of your fishing license is issued immediately. Hunting licenses purchased online through the Outdoor Shop are confirmed at the time of sale through an official email from the Game Commission and licenses are mailed to the buyer within two weeks of purchase.

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Anyone who encounters a website offering the sale of a Pennsylvania fishing or hunting **license** that does not link to The Outdoor Shop to complete the transaction should call the PFBC Fishing **License** Help Line at 877-707-4085 or the Game Commission's **license** division at 717-787-2084.

Victims of a fishing or hunting **license scam** should notify the state Attorney General by completing a **Scams** Complaint Form.

Reach Bill O'Boyle at 570-991-6118 or on Twitter @TLBillOBoyle.

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